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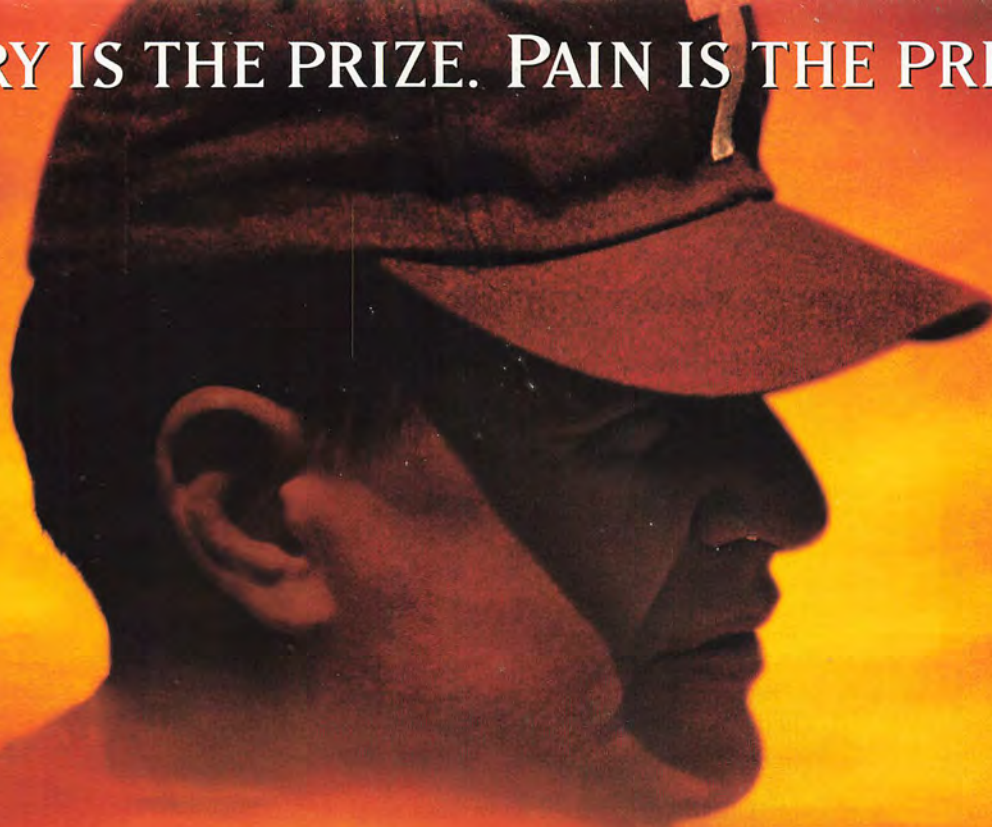
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One Year Later

Huskers look for answers after difficult season



Brian Hill

IT WAS INEVITABLE that Nebraska's amazing streak of nine-win seasons would come to an end. It's not such a shock that it happened, just the way it happened.

One year after playing in a bowl game for a national championship, the Huskers find themselves playing in a bowl game to finish above .500. It's been difficult for the players and coaches. And as the gentleman who delivered my magazines a few weeks ago said, "It's a tough year to be a fan."

We've heard the term "uncharted territory" more than a few times this season. No one involved is used to dealing with seasons like this.

We've heard a multitude of explanations, excuses and reasons for the drop-off. The one that is sometimes overlooked is the unexpected hit to the offensive line when All-America guard Toniu Fonoti left a year early for the NFL.

Fonoti was a tremendous run blocker and is a rookie starter for the San Diego Chargers. The presence of the massive guard might have made a big difference for first-year starter Jammal Lord and 2001's Big 12 leading rusher Dahrran Diedrick.

Defensive coordinator Craig Bohl has taken a beating in the last year. You wonder if things might have been different if he'd had all his players healthy.

Injuries are part of the game, but the Nebraska defense probably had more than its share. Willie Amos, the fastest defensive back, suffered a season-ending knee injury during spring practice. Nose

tackle Jason Lohr went down for the season during fall camp. Top rush end Chris Kelsay missed five games.

Good teams can often mask their shortcomings and overcome adversity. The 2002 Huskers rarely have.

This season's statistics show some very un-Nebraska-like numbers. The Huskers have been outscored in the first and third quarters, and their opponents have run 42 more plays. Last year, NU outscored its opponents 116-58 in the first quarter and 93-17 in the third and ran 58 more plays.

In the regular-season finale against Colorado, Nebraska made critical mistakes — penalties, turnovers, missed blocks, etc. — at crucial times. The Huskers also appeared to lack the speed to contend with the Buffs' outside running game in the second half.

There were some positives in another disappointing loss. Fill-in kicker Dale Endorf made both his field goal attempts, and true

freshman tight end Matt Herian again showed his big-play potential.

You can read more about the Huskers' final regular-season game in this issue of *Huskers Illustrated*.

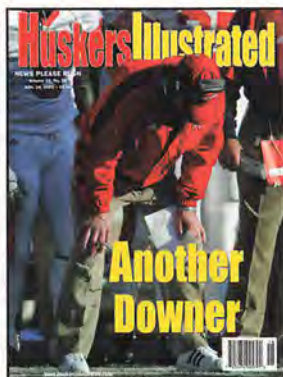
Our feature story is an update on former Husker Mike Dumps, a member of the 1998 recruiting class who has worked to re-shape his self-image after his football career came to an end.

On Thanksgiving weekend, 27 Husker seniors were introduced before their final game at Memorial Stadium, and it certainly looked like it might be a memorable one.

Endorf's 49-yard field goal gave Nebraska a 13-7 lead early in the third quarter and started many believing that the nine-win string might live another year.

Then Colorado took over, and the result was more disappointment and frustration.

It's been that kind of a year. ■



ON THE COVER

Kyle Minds, a sophomore from Wayne, Neb., watches the final seconds tick away, as Nebraska falls to Colorado 28-13 to end the regular season at 7-6. Photo by Scott Bruhn

Huskers Illustrated

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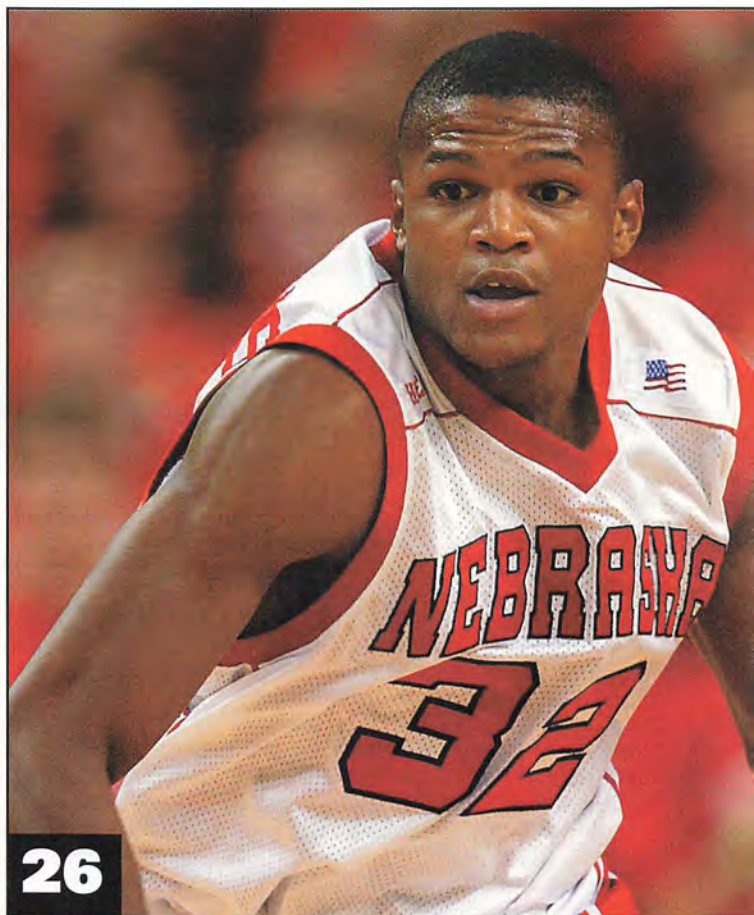
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14 More Than Football

Mike Demps expected to be finishing off a successful college football career about now. *By Mike Babcock*

Filling Needs

Nebraska men's basketball coach Barry Collier addressed what he described as "some needs at point guard and on the perimeter" with the signing of high school players Charles Richardson and Shuan Stegall to letters of intent during the early signing period in mid-November.

Richardson, a 5-foot-9, 160-pound point guard from Proviso East High in Maywood, Ill., is regarded as an outstanding defender. He averaged nine points, five rebounds, eight assists and five steals as a junior, for a team that finished with a 26-3 record and reached the sectional final in the state's large-schools classification. Proviso East was 25-4 during Richardson's sophomore season.

He also played for an AAU elite team the past two summers. The team won the national 17-and-under title in 2001. Wyoming, Mississippi State, Florida State and DePaul also recruited him.

The 6-foot-6, 205-pound Stegall has played point guard, shooting guard and wing during his three seasons at Redan High in Stone Mountain, Ga. Redan has advanced to the state tournament in each of those three seasons, reaching the quarterfinals last season and finishing 21-5. Stegall averaged 17.3 points, 8.1 rebounds, 4.7 assists, 2.4 blocks and 2.0 steals and was first-team all-county.

Stegall also played on an AAU team last summer, averaging 10 points and six rebounds. Marshall, Louisiana Tech, Clemson and Georgia State are among the other schools that recruited him.

Both Richardson and Stegall are honor-roll students.

In addition to signing Richardson and Stegall, Collier announced in mid-November that junior walk-on Andrew Drevo will go on scholarship for the 2003-04 season.

Drevo redshirted last season after transferring from Morningside College.

First-year women's basketball coach Connie Yori signed five players in mid-November, "getting three talented guards and two quality post players" in Andrea Lightfoot, Heather Kephart, Kiera Hardy, Jessica Gerhart and Chelsea Aubry, the Husker basketball team's first Canadian recruit.

All five signees are high school



Barry Collier

players.

"What our staff has been able to accomplish despite our late start in recruiting this year is very encouraging for the direction of our program," Yori said in a release. "We are pleased with our recruiting class thus far."

Lightfoot, the only Nebraskan in the group, is a 5-foot-8 guard from Marian High in Omaha, where she averaged 19.3 points and was a second-team all-state selection as a junior.

She is "the best senior guard in the state of Nebraska," according to Yori.

Kephart, who also is 5-foot-8, averaged 30.1 points for Canute, Okla., High as a junior. She is a three-year starter and needs 570 points to break the state's career-scoring record.

She has scored 2,144 points in 87 games during her three seasons.

Kephart shot 42 percent from 3-point range as a junior and has scored at least 15 points in 82 of 87 games during her career. "Heather fills a great need in our program because she is a great shooter," Yori said. "She is one of the best high school shooters I've seen, and she is highly competitive. She will be a very good leader for us."

The same might be said of Hardy, a 5-foot-6 guard from O'Hara High in Kansas City, Mo. A two-time all-state selection in Class 3A, the state's second largest, Hardy has averaged 19.2 points per game during her career. She has "excellent one-on-one and passing skills," said Yori.



Connie Yori

Hardy picked NU over Missouri-Kansas City and Wichita State.

Gerhart is a 6-foot-2 forward from Sentral Community High in Bancroft, Iowa.

She averaged 23 points and 11.2 rebounds last season, hitting 64 percent from the field, for a team that finished 25-1. She earned Midwest All-America honorable mention from Street & Smith's last season, choosing Nebraska over Northern Iowa, Bradley and Minnesota State-Mankato. Gerhart might have attracted more recruiting attention if she weren't from a small town, according to Yori.

Aubry, a 6-foot-2 forward from Grand River Collegiate Institute in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, has played organized basketball for just six years, after giving up soccer and dance.

She has been a member of the Canadian National Team and also plays rugby and volleyball.

"Chelsea has tremendous strength, which gives her the ability to score inside," Yori said. "But she also has perimeter skills. What I especially like about her is her defensive versatility. She is strong enough to guard an inside player but quick enough to guard a perimeter player."

Aubry attended the Nike All-Canada Camp in Toronto in October, one of only 72 players there. She picked Nebraska over Iowa State, Michigan State, Vermont and Toledo, among other schools. ■

BASEBALL RECRUITS

Ian Bladergroen, a 6-foot-5, 210-pound first baseman at Lamar, Colo., Community College, is among 11 players who signed baseball letters of intent with Nebraska in November.

Bladergroen, who was drafted by the New York Mets (44th round) in 2002, hit .439 with 17 home runs and 80 runs-batted-in to earn first-team NJCAA All-America recognition as a freshman.

He is among five junior college players in the Cornhusker recruiting class, which includes right-handed pitcher Matt Foust, left-handed pitcher Anthony Watson and outfielder Braden Keith, all of whom are rated among the top high school players in their respective states.

The 6-2, 235-pound Foust is from Blue Valley West High in Overland Park, Kan., where he was 3-0 with a 1.23 earned-run average and 45 strikeouts in 23 2/3 innings as a junior.

Watson, 6-4 and 175 pounds, struck out 77 and allowed just 31 hits in 77 innings, pitching for Dallas Center-Grimes, Iowa, High. He posted an 11-1 record, with a 0.63 ERA.

Keith batted .741 (43-58) in 18 games at Falcon, Colo., High. Nearly half of his hits went for extra bases, 10 doubles, five triples and six home runs. He also stole 13 bases in 13 attempts.

All three high school players have the ability to make significant contributions as freshmen, according to Coach Mike Anderson. Foust, for example, "has the potential to pitch a lot of innings for us as a freshman and to be a difference-maker for us," Anderson said in a release.

Matthew Pike, another high school pitcher at Centennial High in Pueblo, Colo., is the brother of Cornhusker football player Gary Pike, a red-shirted freshman offensive lineman.

"Over the years, we have tried to sign some of the top high school and junior college players from Nebraska and throughout the Midwest, and this class shows a concentrated effort in this region," said Anderson. "We believe they all have the ability to contribute next season."

The recruits:

Ian Bladergroen, 1B, L/L, Albuquerque, N.M (Lamar, Colo., Community College); John Bowden, C, R/R, Springfield, Ore. (Thurston High School); Matt Foust, R/R, Overland Park, Kan. (Blue Valley West); Brad Furnish, P, L/L, Allen, Texas; Braden Keith, OF, L/L, Falcon, Colo.; Josh Odell, INF, R/R, Shawnee, Okla. (Hutchinson, Kan., Community College); Matthew Pike, P, R/R, Pueblo, Colo. (Centennial); Lance Scharz, C, R/R, Larned, Kan. (Garden City, Kan., Community College); Colin Shockey, UTL, L/R, Ralston, Neb. (Iowa Western Community College); Anthony Watson, P, L/L, Grimes, Iowa (Dallas Center-Grimes); B.J. Wierzbicki, P, R/R, Ralston, Neb. (Iowa Western).

SOFTBALL RECRUITS

Ashley Eoriatti, a four-time Omaha World-Herald first-team All-Nebraska selection and three-time Lincoln Journal Star Super-State outfielder, is among four high school players signing letters of intent with Coach Rhonda Revelle's Husker softball program in November.

Eoriatti batted .478, with a .748 slugging percentage, 32 runs scored, 30 runs-batted-in and 13 doubles at Omaha's Millard West High during the fall season as a senior. She will graduate in December and enroll at Nebraska for the spring semester — during which she will be redshirted.

"Every one of our signees this year has played on a team that has had tremendous successes," Revelle said in a release announcing the recruits. "They were all significant contributors."

The recruits:

Devin Porter, SS, Long Beach, Calif. (Lakewood High); Ashley Eoriatti, OF, Omaha (Millard West); Ashley DeBuhr, P, Beatrice, Neb.; Jamie Waldecker, C, Garden Grove, Calif. (Pacifica). ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

FRANK'S 2 CENTS

Receivers coach Ron Brown predicts true freshman tight end Matt Herian will be a "household name" before his Cornhusker career is finished, and Coach Frank Solich adds to the praise.

"He's a great athlete, and that shows any time he gets matched up," Solich said. "Playing the tight end spot, you're matched up a lot with safeties and, of course with his kind of speed, it's not all that easy for a safety to come up and support the run and then go to play him on a lot of deep throws."

The 6-foot-4 Herian is listed at only 215 pounds, but "if you look at his frame, he can handle additional size, and certainly the strength part of it will be a positive for him," said Solich.

"We will not get him so big that he slows down. That would not be what we're after. He's a real threat there as a tight end. We will be able to move him around in different formations and he can play as a slot and be very effective. It will be great to have that kind of flexibility in the program."

Even so, Herian will need some help at the position next season given the way Nebraska uses tight ends. He is the only non-senior among the top five ends on the depth chart.

NOT ON THE FULLBACKS

In 12 games last season, fullbacks Judd Davies and Steve Kriewald combined to rush for 333 yards on 58 carries. In the first 12 games this season, they combined for 138 yards on 38 carries.

"There haven't been many opportunities for them in the running game, so consequently, that phase of it is down from what it's been," said Solich. "But that's not necessarily in the fullbacks' laps."

"If you look at many I-oriented football teams, you'll find that very few carries are made by the fullback, and it's all designed, in most cases, around the I-back."

A more significant factor, perhaps, has been the Cornhuskers' inconsistency. In 12 games last season, they had 672 rushes. Going into the Colorado game, they had rushed only 626 times.



Ahman Green

NO SURPRISE

Former Cornhusker Ahman Green has established himself as one of the best backs in the NFL with the Green Bay Packers. And Nebraska junior DeAntae Grixby isn't surprised.

"Not at all," said Grixby, like Green a graduate of Omaha Central High School. "I knew he was going to be (successful). He was never big-headed. You wouldn't believe how he is."

"He's not your typical type of pro back. Even when he comes back to Lincoln now, he's not in that glamour thing. He's just all about kicking back, playing video games. He's a big kid."

Put another way, "he's a geek," Grixby said with a laugh.

ANOTHER SEASON TO GO

Junior I-back Josh Davis now holds most of Nebraska's kickoff-return records and he still has another season to add to his career totals. "We're real proud of him," said Solich.

"What we don't want to do is line up that much on kickoffs."

Going into the Colorado game, Nebraska had returned 40 kickoffs as a team, only three short of the school record set in 1951. By comparison, the Cornhuskers returned 30 kickoffs last season.

SIXTH MAN

Sophomore Corey Simms has shown marked improvement and figures prominently in basketball coach Barry Collier's plans. "He's clearly kind of a sixth man, or a sixth starter even," Collier said after the Cornhuskers' second exhibition game. "What he's been for us is a pretty good defender, position defender and physical defender, and also a rebounder on both ends of the floor. He's been a slasher."

The 6-foot-5, 205-pound Simms averaged 3.6 points and 2.3 rebounds last season.

FINISHING STRONG

That Amanda Cleveland is even playing with the women's basketball team is no small accomplishment. The 6-foot-2 senior from Lancaster, Texas, is in her sixth season of a career delayed for three years by a battle against aplastic anemia, which began when she was a freshman. Aplastic anemia is a rare blood disorder that prevents bone marrow from producing new blood cells.

Cleveland was able to return last season, playing in 22 games. ■

Degree The Key

*'Old-man' Cornelsen believed in himself
and made it through to the end*



**Mike
BABCOCK**

THOSE IN BEN CORNELSEN'S recruiting class are gone, all of them. He is the only one remaining, in a group that included Eric Crouch, Correll Buckhalter and Dominic Raiola.

When he looks around the locker room, he visualizes where each was locked.

"They're all kind of disappearing," he said after a recent practice.

Technically, Cornelsen is the last of Tom Osborne's recruits, though he didn't enroll at Nebraska full-time until January of 1998, following Osborne's retirement as head coach.

Cornelsen, a senior wingback, delayed enrolling because of shoulder surgery in the summer of 1997. The surgery repaired an injury that occurred during the wrestling season his junior year at Shawnee Mission, Kan., Northwest High School. He was the state runner-up at 160 pounds.

Looking back, he said, he should have had the surgery right away.

Waiting on the shoulder surgery was one of a couple of bad decisions that significantly affected Cornelsen's football career. The other resulted in an automobile accident.

"I knew the weather was going to be bad, and I decided to go anyway," he said.

The accident occurred on Jan. 17, 1998, and effectively sidelined him until the second game of his freshman season. He almost certainly would have been redshirted, anyway.

Still, the injuries he sustained in the accident "put me six months behind," he said. That delay, combined with the need for more surgery on his shoulder led to the coaches' suggesting in the spring of 1999 that he be put on medical scholarship, thereby ending his career.

Athletes on medical scholarship can stay involved as undergraduate assistants but they can't come back and play. "That killed my confidence a little, when they asked me to do that," said Cornelsen. "But I told them I didn't want to carry a clipboard, that I was going to stick with it.

"You've just got to keep strong, I guess. I knew I could come back. I wasn't going to give up that easily. I learned a lot about believing in myself. I wanted to make it through to the end."

He has done that, playing this season with degree in hand, as an unclassified graduate student.

Receiving the degree, in communication studies last

December, "possibly outweighs everything I've done on the football field," Cornelsen said. "That, to me, is the biggest thing I've accomplished here. I think now I value that more than anything else. I'm very, very proud of it."

He's contemplating finishing a film study degree now.

"I've been a movie freak for as long as I can remember," he said. "I really enjoy how films are made, the history of it all, learning about directing styles. I'll see where it takes me."

It could take him to a film studies school in San Francisco.

Or "I could get a job selling insurance or something," he said.

The persistence that has kept him at Nebraska undoubtedly would serve him well in sales. And his football experiences have taught him about universal truths often reflected in film.

His Cornhusker career has "had its ups and definitely more downs," said Cornelsen. "But that's just part of life. You make decisions and you've just got to live with them."

As is the case for most athletes, the associations with teammates and coaches, "interacting with people, that's definitely an up, and being able to walk out of the tunnel on Saturdays."

Though he caught only one pass prior to this season, he did return a punt 71 yards for a touchdown in front of family and friends at Kansas a year ago. And that was a career highlight, certainly.

Even so, "I really don't think about the punt return very much," he said. "I mean, it was great and I'll always remember it. But I think more of the blown chances, what I could have done."

His confidence and optimism knew no bounds when he signed a letter of intent with Nebraska in February of 1997. That seems "like ages ago," he said. "I really have to think back."

Cornelsen celebrated his 24th birthday in September and is the only player on this year's team born in 1978. "I feel old, I'll tell you that," he said. "When freshmen come in, they're kind of naive, wet behind the ears. It makes me wonder if I was that way when I came in.

"I look back and I'm like, 'Man, some of the stuff they say, some of the stuff they talk about, I wonder if I was that kind of arrogant when I came in.'"

He probably was. But "when you go through the system, you grow up," he said.

And he has. ■



Ben Cornelsen
returned a punt for a
touchdown as a junior.

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Bittersweet Experience

Former walk-on Shanle's senior season has had its highs as well as its lows



Terry DOUGLASS

REPORTERS WAITING to interview Scott Shanle after football practice might as well be making a Snickers candy bar commercial because they're not going anywhere for a while.

To his credit, Shanle has the reputation for always being one of the last guys out of the weight room. The Monday prior to the Colorado game was no different. Several minutes after the majority of Nebraska's players had cleared out for the night, Shanle finally emerged from an intensive lifting session.

"It's just something I enjoy," Shanle said of his time spent in the Nebraska weight room. "It would be a lot different if every day I was going in there saying, 'I don't want to do this,' but I've realized since the high school level that lifting weights is something that has helped me. From injury prevention to helping your speed and strength — it all ties in to one another at this level and in this game."

In a season that has seen the Huskers lose more games than they're accustomed to, one might think that Shanle's desire to pump iron would be reduced. However, just the opposite is true for the senior from St. Edward, now in his third year as the starting strongside linebacker.

"I think I've hit it even harder this year," Shanle said. "Sometimes you feel like you're tired and you just want to hit a quick session and get out, but I don't want to do that my senior year. I don't want to take any steps backward."

Shanle's attitude probably shouldn't come as any surprise. After all, it has been his work ethic that has allowed him to make it at Nebraska. The former eight-man standout is yet another example of a walk-on using hard work and determination to achieve a lifelong goal of playing for the Cornhuskers.

"This is the reason the Nebraska walk-on program has been so successful, because you see other players come in and accomplish something," Shanle said. "You know the opportunity is there. I saw other people do it, and I knew that I had a great work ethic and am a very goal-oriented person, so I knew I could come in and do it."

Still, Shanle remained realistic about his chances.

"For every one or two walk-ons that do something, there's many others who never really get to start or contribute on Saturdays in a way that everyone sees," Shanle said. "You just come and you know that they are going to give you an opportunity here. If you come in, you impress them and show that you can play at this level, they're going to play you even if you're a walk-on."

After a redshirt year in 1998, Shanle made his impression on the coaching staff in spring practice of 1999. With his impressive play, he earned a spot on special teams and appeared in every game his freshman season. After Tony Ortiz and Brian Shaw completed their eligibility, Shanle

became the starter in 2000 and earned a scholarship.

It was then that Shanle knew his decision to walk on at Nebraska had finally paid off. He had considered going to Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State and Missouri, but in his heart, Shanle always wanted to be a Husker.

"I think Nebraska showed enough interest in me coming out of high school to make me feel like they wanted me to come here because they saw something in me," Shanle said. "If they had just said, 'well, you can come down if you want,' then that would have been a very different situation, and I probably would have never come. That made the decision a lot easier."

Shanle's first two seasons as a starter were remarkably consistent. He finished fifth on the team in tackles both years, registering 56 tackles last season and 55 stops in 2000. Through 12 games this season, Shanle ranked fourth on the squad with a career-high 65 tackles, including five for losses and two sacks.

While Shanle's dream of winning a national championship at Nebraska never materialized, he admits his individual achievements have far surpassed anything he could've hoped for.

"I've told everybody, I could never have scripted it better than it has turned out," Shanle said. "To contribute to a Nebraska team that I grew up watching and wanting to play for all those years as a little kid all the way through high school, it couldn't have turned out any better."

"I look at all the people I've met and the coaches I've played for, and it has just been a truly great experience for me."

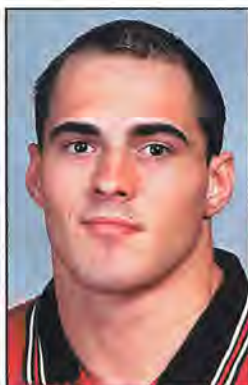
In many ways, Shanle said his senior season has been an incredibly bittersweet experience. The highs have included becoming a senior team leader and playing in the same program as his brother, freshman defensive back Andrew Shanle. Obviously, the down side has been enduring the worst season, in terms of losses, since 1961.

"It's been real different," Shanle said. "We're in unfamiliar territory and territory that I hope this program isn't in for long — and I'm sure they won't be in it for long. I would have never thought we'd have this kind of season, and I'm sure a lot of other people would have never thought that."

To prove that something positive can be extracted from almost any situation, Shanle said he's gotten to see a side of his teammates he's never known, as the team has continually faced the difficult task of bouncing back from tough losses.

"Up until this year, we had never experienced that before," Shanle said. "This year, we lost two early in the season and then had a few more, and it was really hard to come back, but we did. For everyone to come back and want to improve in the areas that we need to, it says a lot about this team and a lot about the character that people have on this team."

"That's one thing we can always be proud of." ■



Scott Shanle is in his third year as a starting linebacker.

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island Independent. He can be reached at tdbdouglass@netzero.net.

Growing Up 'Real Fast'

Johnson says experiences off the court gave him 'another edge in discipline'



Curt McKEEVER

NATE JOHNSON LEARNED from his mother, a single woman who raised her five children in the projects of Kansas City, Kan., the value of leadership.

Follow other people, Mary Johnson insisted, and you will never get ahead in life.

No wonder Nate — now a starting guard at Nebraska and choice for Big 12 Preseason Newcomer of the Year — has tended to hang out at the front of the line.

Last season, the 6-foot-2 guard led his Penn Valley (Mo.) Community College basketball team to the Division II junior college national title game, averaging 30.5 points in the tournament's four games.

A preseason article in the school newspaper predicted Johnson would, like Moses, split the Red Sea and lead Penn Valley, just 15-16 the previous year, to the promised land.

"I took that personally," Johnson said. "I told my team that it was going to start with y'all, but it's going to end with me."

Times are good for Johnson these days. But that hasn't always been the case.

Victor Williams, now a guard at Oklahoma State, lived down the street from his good friend, and said the absence of a father figure affected Johnson.

"Growing up and not having a dad there all the time makes a person grow up real fast," Williams said.

Mary Johnson credits a loving, but not always easy childhood for her son's demeanor today.

"He got what he needed, and not what he wanted," she said. "A lot of children, they get what they want and don't have to work for it. When you work for it, you will appreciate it more."

Johnson has no trouble enjoying where he's at now. It wasn't that long ago that his life seemed in chaos.

At the beginning of his senior year at Wyandotte, Johnson got in trouble when he got involved with a friend who broke into a house and stole some electronic equipment. Johnson attempted to sell the items at a pawn shop, but a background check showed police had a juvenile warrant for his arrest dating back to a sixth-grade anger management class he failed to take.

Johnson, who admits he used to be quick-tempered, spent nearly three weeks in jail and received a two-year probation after being charged as an accessory to burglary. But after several run-ins with his probation officer, which included a battle over whether he could attend Neosho Community College in Kansas, Johnson was left with a decision. He could either spend 6 years in prison or 6 months in boot camp.

Johnson chose the latter, and from the time he got out in June 1999, he's never been the same.

"It gave me another edge in discipline and helped me physically," he said. "It made me the man that I need to be, and I

realized life's not a game. If I would have put all the energy into life that I did basketball, I would have been all right."

Johnson's new coach, Barry Collier, isn't worried about his past.

"He readily admits his mistakes and has moved on," Collier said. "It's been a huge turnaround for him, and he has a lot of reason to be proud. Given all that, he deserves an opportunity."

Johnson, who originally gave an oral commitment to Oklahoma, jumped to Nebraska when an NCAA ruling gave the Huskers an additional scholarship.

At Penn Valley, he averaged 26.5 points for a team that needed his scoring. That production caused his coach to compare him to Allen Iverson.

"A lot of people came up to me and said, 'Allen Iverson? Come on, man!'" said Penn Valley's Clay Johnson, who played in the NBA for three years. "But you've got to see him play."

The question about Nate Johnson is how will his explosive game translate in Collier's deliberate style. Johnson tried not to draw too much attention to himself in the Huskers' two exhibition games. But his breakaway dunk against Northwest Sports gave NU fans a hint of the kind of flash he brings.

Johnson gives Nebraska a strong threat off the dribble. He strokes a sweet jump shot and can drive in to the lane and pull up.

Junior forward Brian Conklin looks for him to have the ball in his hands a lot during crunch time.

"He can beat you in a lot of different ways," Conklin said. "He can drive on you and finish with either hand around the basket. He can hit the outside shot pretty consistently. He's going to be a big factor for us."

Sophomore guard Jake Muhleisen agreed.

"Nobody's going to fill that role as a shooter like Cary (Cochran), but he comes in and does a lot of things real well," he said. "He'll just help our all-around quickness and athleticism on the perimeter."

And then, there's his ability to lead.

"Nate is a guy that wanted to play on the highest level in this part of the country, and he was very willing to fit in," Collier said. "He's never been a guy that's carried a big ego to scare away people with always talking about himself."

"I'm hopeful that we can get (a lot) out of Nate offensively, and set him up, (but) I've certainly been pleased by his attitude. You hope that the guy can fit in and wants to fit in. That maybe is the biggest thing with Nate, that he wants to be a part of something. It's not that he's afraid to try to go get things done. He's (just) not interested in being selfish, and sees what can happen when we do things together." ■



Nate Johnson averaged 26.5 points for his junior college team.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Rare Opportunity

Backup fullback was ready to go when he got his chance to play

The highlight of Paul Kastl's five years at Nebraska was, without question, last season's Texas Tech game. "That kind of made it all worth while right there," the senior fullback said.

With starter Judd Davies leaving the game early with an ankle sprain and back-up Steve Kriewald already sidelined by an ankle sprain, Kastl got an opportunity to play, and contribute.

In addition to helping clear the way for I-back Dahrran Diedrick and quarterback Eric Crouch, he carried three times for 13 of the Cornhuskers' 335 rushing yards in the 41-31 victory.

That's how he hoped it would be when he walked on in the fall of 1998, following a senior season at Lincoln's Pius X High School in which he rushed for 1,900 yards as a tailback.

"It would have been ideal to play every down like that," he said.

That isn't how it turned out, of course. After contributing to Nebraska's upset of Oklahoma the week after the Texas Tech game and then carrying three times for 7 yards against Kansas the week after that, Kastl's role reverted to playing primarily on special teams. And it hasn't changed.

Going into the Colorado game, he had yet to carry the ball this season. "I kind of haven't seen the field as much as I would have liked my senior year," he said. "But I can't complain. I'll never regret coming here, playing in front of great fans, playing for my family and for myself.

"Everybody has been real supportive of me and proud of what I have accomplished."

Kastl turned down scholarship offers elsewhere to walk on at Nebraska.

PAUL KASTL
No. 37
Senior Fullback
5-10, 235
Lincoln, Neb.
(Pius X)

While still at New Mexico State, Cornhusker defensive line coach Jeff Jamrog recruited him for the Aggies, and he had opportunities to go to several smaller schools, among them Nebraska-Omaha and Nebraska-Kearney. But he was determined to prove he could play at Nebraska.

"I wanted to let people know I was worthy of a scholarship," he said.

He did that. He was put on scholarship last spring. However, scholarships are awarded to walk-ons on a semester-to-semester basis, and his was pulled in order to stay at the 85 limit.

"That was kind of a bum deal," he said. Still, he proved his point.

"When you walk on, it's an up-hill battle to try to prove yourself to the coaches, let them know you're wor-

thy of playing for the university. At the same time, I feel real pleased about what I've done coming in as a walk-on because you aren't too positive about how everything is going to go.

"In high school, you're the man. Here you're just like everybody else in the mix."

Most freshmen are reminded of that every day in practice, playing on the scout team. For Kastl, however, that experience "was fun. I enjoyed it," he said. "We'd have fights every day."

He found himself lining up against Mike Rucker and Jay Foreman, both of whom are now playing in the NFL, testing himself. "You get your bell rung once and then again," he said. "That's kind of how you get brought into the pro-

gram. That's how you become a man, I guess.

"I liked it. It was a great experience for me."

But, he was quick to add, "I'm glad I did only one year of it."

Kastl is on schedule to graduate in the spring, with a degree in sociology.

Five years of football have taken a physical toll, and "it will be kind of nice to move on," he said. "I think once we get done with the bowl game, I'm going to have a lot of time on my hands that I never had before."

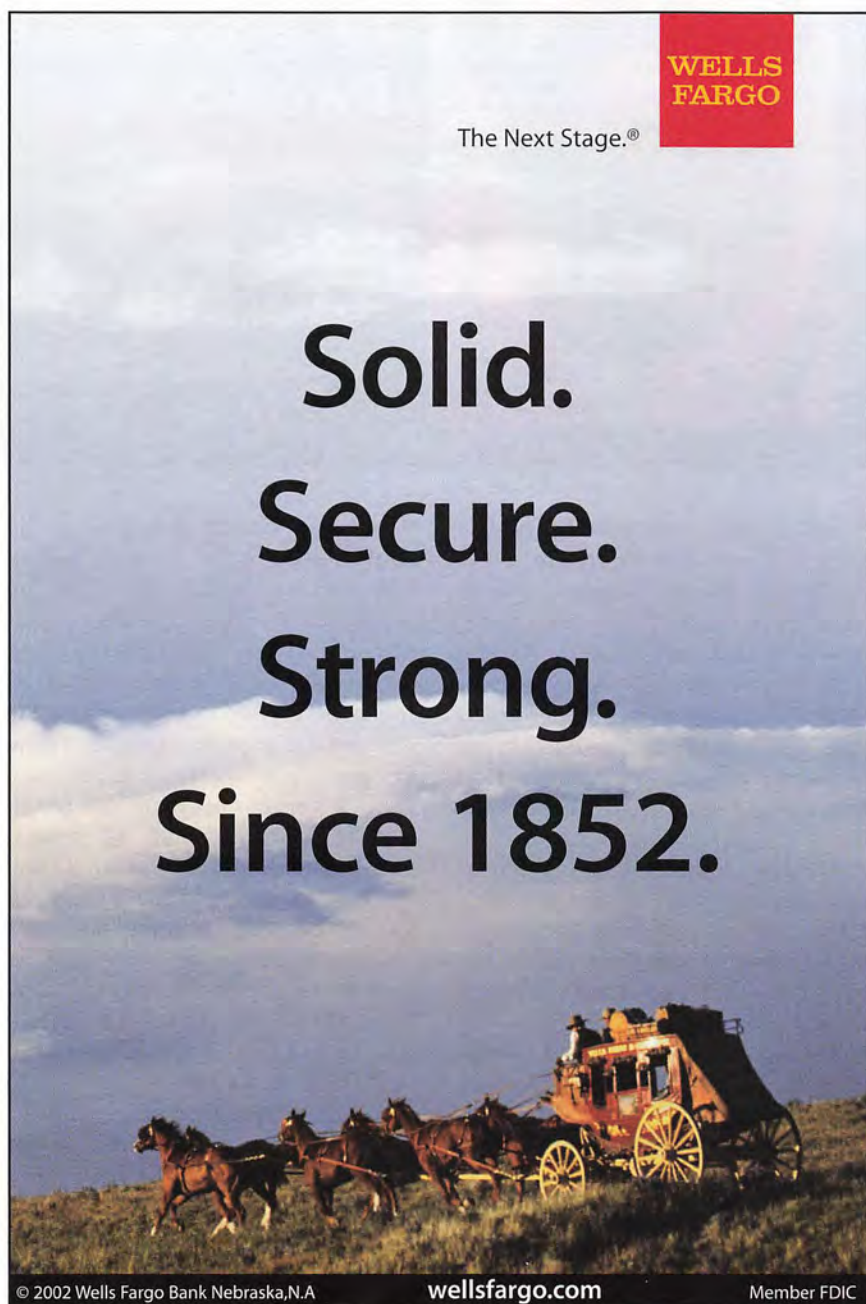
Still, "my thoughts are kind of mixed. I know I'm going to miss it."

Unlike some fifth-year seniors, he

isn't burned out. His parents didn't allow him to play organized football until he was a high school freshman, and he suffered a broken leg in the first game of his first season. So he played only three years of football before walking on at Nebraska.

If he hadn't worked hard, he wouldn't have been able to capitalize on the opportunities in the Texas Tech and Oklahoma games. "Preparation played into it," he said. "That's what they always tell you, you've got to practice as if you're going to get in there. A couple of injuries and you're there."

That's exactly how it happened for him. And "those games made it worth it," he said. ■



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More Than

Demps works to re-shape his self-image after football career comes to an end

By Mike Babcock

The red Nike ballcap is marked with Bible passages to remind Mike Demps of the spiritual journey that began when he signed a football letter of intent with Nebraska in February of 1998.

Beneath the bill, Demps has written "Sept. 22, 2002," the date he was saved in church.

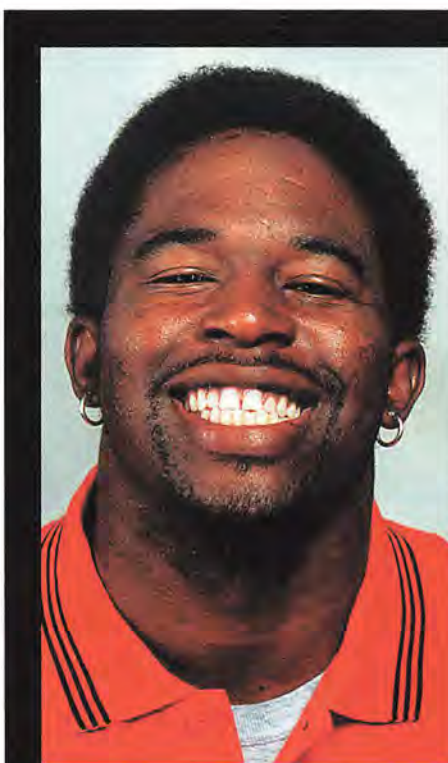
That salvation can be traced to, among others, Des Moines Adams and Jamar Banks.

Adams also was a member of the Cornhuskers' 1998 recruiting class. Banks is an athletic department academic counselor as well as the coordinator of multicultural programming.

"I pray to God every night that I'm thankful Des Moines and Jamar are in my life," said Demps. Without their support, his journey undoubtedly would have gone in a dramatically different direction.

When he arrived at Nebraska in the summer prior to his freshman year, Demps believed the journey would take him to the National Football League. That belief was reinforced in the 1999 spring intrasquad game, during which he returned a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown.

In the spring of 2001, however, he was forced to leave that path because of a left knee injury, which could be



"I feel like Nebraska has made me a better man for this world. I wouldn't trade this experience for anything."

— Mike Demps

traced to his junior year at Dunbar High School in Fort Worth, Texas.

Though the injury was repaired by surgery before his senior year, it never healed sufficiently. And a week before the 2001 spring game, Demps made the difficult decision to give up football. He couldn't bring himself to attend, so he watched on television, "reminiscing about old times."

Demps remained on medical scholarship, which meant he couldn't resume playing, and became an undergraduate assistant coach the next fall. That lasted only a short time.

He would be on the field, working with his former teammates, and "go into a deep depression," he said.

"I was watching, and it was like, 'Oh, my God,' thinking what could have been.

"So eventually, I ended up telling the coaches it was too hard for me to do."

A year would pass before he could return to the football field to help coach. During that time, he would try to watch games on television and have to fight back the tears.

He considered transferring, starting over, trying to play again. He resisted the urge, however, and now knows why. His experience "allowed me to open up my life to my religion and made me have a more solid foundation with God," he said. "That could have been my God-given will, to come here and become a better man."

Adams and Banks were those most responsible for his conversion. If he hadn't stayed, "I wouldn't have had those key elements come into my life, to change my life," he said.

A university class that focused on the social responsibilities of African-American men and the role they play in their communities also helped to reshape his self-image.

That self-image had always

n Football



Mike Demps was in the spotlight when he arrived at Nebraska from Fort Worth, Texas, as a member of the 1998 recruiting class.

depended on athletics, specifically football, at which he had been successful since he began playing at age 5, and track, which complemented football. He was fast, even after the knee surgery, running the 100 meters in 10.31 and the 200 meters in 21.10.

As a senior at Dunbar, he rushed for 1,346 yards and scored 20 touchdowns.

He received honorable mention as the USA Today Texas high school player of the year and was a Class 5A, first-team, all-area selection by the Fort Worth Star Telegram.

Nebraska was among many major programs that recruited him. His final list also included Texas Tech, SMU, New Mexico, UCLA and

Oklahoma State. After a college career in which he would earn All-America honors, "I'm going to the NFL, man," he said, "just watch." That's how it would be.

It wasn't entirely about himself, however. He came from a poor background, a single-parent household with four brothers and a sister, he said, and "my whole intention was to try to make a living in football, be able to provide for my family. I was going to come here and get everything right.

"At the time, I felt like that was the only way I could do it."

School was a means to an end, something to endure on the way to NFL.

With the help of Adams and Banks, however, Demps came to understand that football didn't need to define who he was. It was simply something that he did, albeit very well.

His friendship with Adams has grown from their initial association as teammates. But that was a secondary consideration. "Des Moines has a genuine love for people, period," said Demps. "He's a minister. That should tell a lot about who he is, what kind of character he has."

Initially, Demps wasn't receptive to Adams' message. Adams would tell him, "Demps, you need to decrease and let God increase," Demps said. "For a long time, I did-

n't understand."

The knee injury enabled him to understand what Adams meant. "As the Bible says, you have to be still for God to work on you," he said. "I wasn't being still. I was moving with the world."

"You can't move with the world when you want God to come into your life."

Demps had begun moving in a positive direction before the stillness.

During the time away from football, he brought a cousin to Lincoln to live with him, in attempt to "promote some kind of difference, just pick up the slack," he said. "I wanted to do something that was positive."

Plus, "my family is more important than football," he said.

Markice Demps, whose father had been killed, came from Fort Worth and attended Culler Middle School. He has since returned to Fort Worth and is "doing real well," Mike said.

Looking after Markice helped him forget about football. But the responsibility also created problems. His

schoolwork began to slide, and when his cousin returned home, he was emotionally set adrift again. Enter Adams and Banks, who have been "so supportive, so instrumental in my life."

Though his self-esteem no longer depends on football, Demps is considering a return. His knee feels strong, and he might seek a tryout at some point with an NFL team, a Canadian league team or even an indoor team. The odds are long, but "I might be a witness to what God is capable of," he said.

Tomorrow, that could change. "Right now, I'm just going day to day," he said.

Demps, one of five members of the 1998 scholarship recruiting class who didn't complete their eligibility at Nebraska, expected to be finishing off a successful college football career about now, a career that would almost certainly position him well for the NFL draft in the spring.

Instead, he is just beginning to understand his place in a greater

scheme.

He is on schedule to graduate in the spring, with a degree in communication studies, he said, and whatever his future involves, he intends to share what he has learned with others.

He doesn't regret coming to Nebraska, quite the contrary. "I feel like Nebraska has made me a better man for this world," he said. "I wouldn't trade this experience for anything."

"If somebody called me right now and said, 'I can let you go in the (NFL) draft next year in the first round, would you trade what you have now,' I wouldn't trade it all."

Philippians 4:13 is among the passages on his cap.

"I can do all things through Christ," it says.

Demps has come to believe that in the last year or so. "I'm trying to fix everything I did wrong," he said. "That's why I think Nebraska not only develops great athletes but also makes great men." ■

Goals

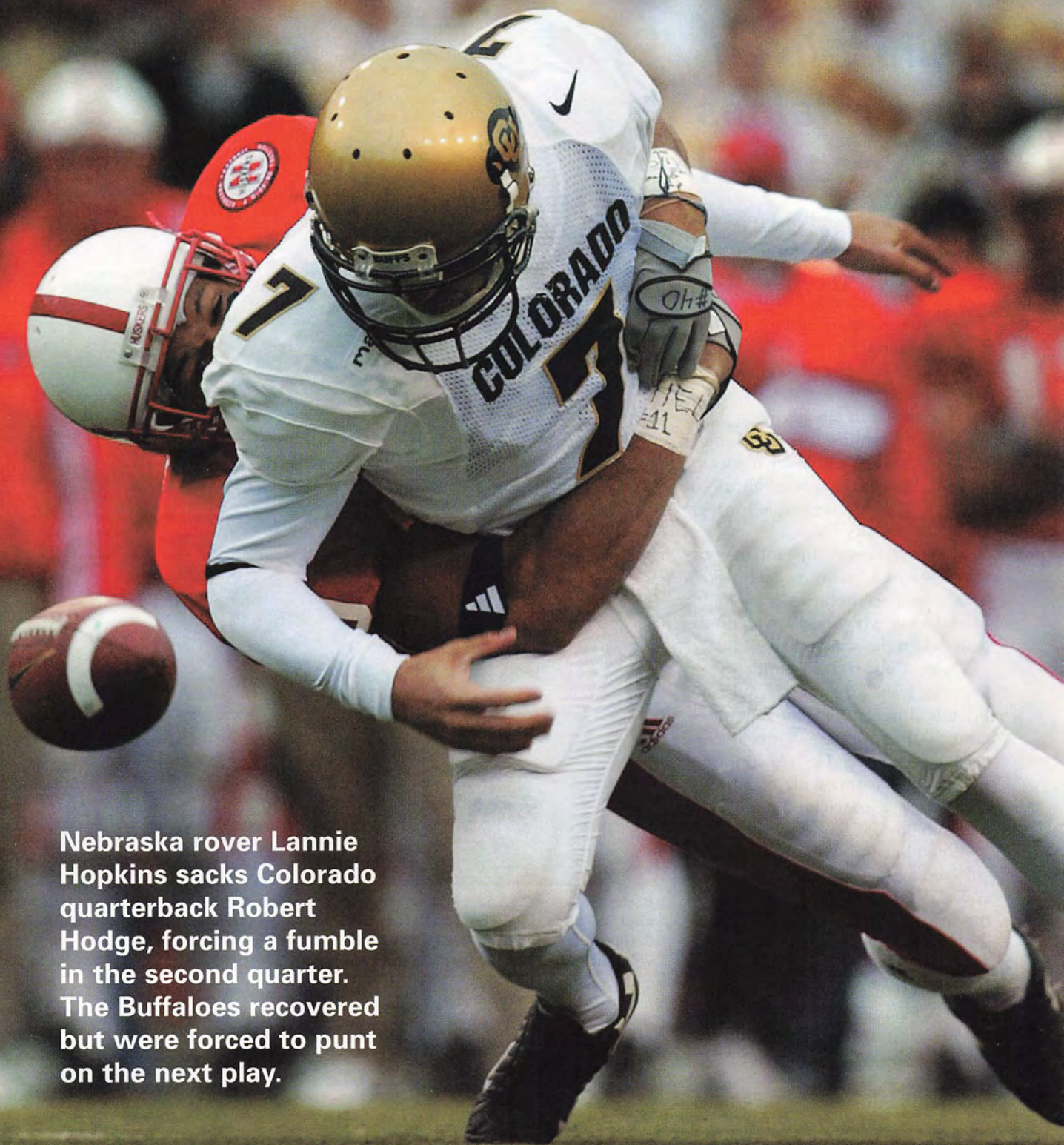
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Nebraska rover Lannie Hopkins sacks Colorado quarterback Robert Hodge, forcing a fumble in the second quarter. The Buffaloes recovered but were forced to punt on the next play.

No Storybook

Euphoria short-lived as Buffaloes take control

Early in the second half of a 28-13 loss to Colorado, it appeared that the calamity this Nebraska season has become might yet have a storybook ending.

Nothing was going to change the harsh reality of five previous losses. The damage had already been done. Still, the Cornhuskers could have salvaged something with a victory against the team that symbolically, if not in fact, was responsible for their precipitous slide.

And for a fleeting instant, that victory seemed within Nebraska's grasp, in part because of a junior place-kicker who wasn't even on the team when the season began.

Dale Endorf, a junior from Wichita, Kan., had transferred from Friends University for the fall semester of 2001 to pursue a degree in electrical engineering. He had contacted the football team, with encouragement from a coach at Friends, but had only kicked on his own.

When back-up Sandro DeAngelis suffered a foot injury in October, and was sidelined for the remainder of the season, kickers coach Dan Young invited him to join the team.

Barely a month later, with senior Josh Brown suspended for the Colorado game after being ticketed for driving under the influence, Endorf found himself as the No. 1 place-kicker.

To describe the situation as unlikely would be to understate it. Endorf played soccer in high school, not football, and really his only kicking in two years at Friends was on



Backup kicker Dale Endorf (32) is congratulated (above) by holder Joe Chrisman (11) after his 49-yard field goal gave Nebraska a 13-7 lead early in the third quarter. But Colorado stormed back, led by the running of No. 4 tailback Brian Calhoun (right), who had 130 of his 137 yards in the second half.

BY MIKE BABCOCK
PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN

kickoffs.

He didn't handle extra-point kicks and attempted only three field

goals at the NAIA school. On one of the attempts, the center snap sailed over his head, and he missed the

Book Ending



other two.

So his extra-point kick to tie the game at 7 with 11:52 remaining in the second quarter was cause for celebration, as was his 33-yard field goal to give Nebraska a 10-7 lead 10 minutes later.

Then he kicked a 49-yard field goal 1:24 into the second half to

extend the lead to 13-7.

That was "crazy," he said. "I don't know what else to say."

By the time his teammates finished congratulating him, "I think he was tired, just because we were jumping on his back," said I-back Dahrran Diedrick. "You could see how happy he was."

As it turned out, however, the happiness was short-lived, 6 minutes and 11 seconds to be exact. That's how much time it took Colorado to drive 80 yards on 15 plays to take the lead.

That lead was all the Buffaloes really needed to send Nebraska down to defeat for a sixth time,



Nebraska junior fullback Judd Davies (4, above) had his biggest game of the season with 5 carries for 59 yards, including a 23-yard run in the second quarter. Colorado fullback Brandon Drumm (33, right), being tackled by NU rover Philip Bland (21), also had a productive day with 33 yards and two touchdowns. Bland was the Huskers' leading tackler with 11.



something that last happened in 1961 — when the Cornhuskers finished 3-6-1.

Colorado added two touchdowns for good measure. But one point or 15, the bitterness was the same. "It's frustrating, you know. It's tough to go out with a defeat," rush end Chris Kelsay said.

Kelsay was among 27 Nebraska seniors introduced before the game, their last at Memorial Stadium. "That's what makes this so difficult," said sophomore rover Philip Bland, who struggled to hold back his emotions afterward. "I still have a chance to get them (Buffaloes) two more times.

"The thing I think about is all the seniors that don't have another chance."

Bland, who is from the Boulder area, did what he could, making a team-high 11 tackles. But then, everyone did what he could, according to Diedrick, who rushed for 96 yards.

"We played our hearts out until the end," Diedrick said.

As has been the case so often, the Cornhuskers' effort was offset by mistakes, including a personal foul penalty on offensive tackle Richie Incognito that forced Endorf's 49-yard field goal.

Nebraska had momentum after recovering a Colorado fumble on the first play from scrimmage in the second half. Demorrio Williams forced and recovered the fumble at the Buffalo 17-yard line. But the first-down penalty pushed the Cornhuskers back to the 30. And they couldn't recover.

"We've had problems along those lines throughout the course of the year," said Coach Frank Solich. "Penalties have been something that's come back to haunt us in quite a few games.

"Certainly, that one was extremely unfortunate. And it cost us."

Colorado's running game contributed to the misfortune, even though junior Chris Brown, the nation's second-leading rusher, didn't suit up because of a bruised sternum.

The Buffaloes rushed for 253 yards, including 178 in the second half, with freshman Brian Calhoun gaining 137 of them. Calhoun replaced starter Bobby Purify, who was injured.

Calhoun went into the game having rushed for 39 yards on 27 carries for the season.

The game was played against a backdrop of rampant rumors regarding imminent change on the Cornhusker coaching staff. Solich declined to comment on the possibility of changes.

"I'll address that as we come out of this weekend," he said during his post-game news conference. "Right now, what I'm answering are questions dealing with this game."

There were no more questions about the game.

Earlier, Solich said he planned to give the team "a little bit of time off" before beginning preparations for a bowl game. Pressbox speculation was that the Cornhuskers most likely would end up in the Independence Bowl at Shreveport,



La., on Dec. 27, playing Mississippi.

But there were other possibilities, based on Big 12 tie-ins.

"What can we take out of a bowl game? A win," said fullback Judd Davies. "We just need to win it, no matter where we go, who we play. It's important to see what kind of character you have, I guess, see how guys work during the next month. It's going to be tough.

"But if you've got character and you care about the team, you've got to work hard."

The experience was bittersweet for Endorf. "The loss hurts," he said. However, "I felt I had a good day. I had a great opportunity. I wanted to do my best. I felt like I achieved that."

He didn't know how long the 49-yarder was until Brown told him as he came off the field. "I just basically went out thinking, 'another field goal,' just kick the ball, kick it straight," he said.

His performance was the stuff of dreams. But Nebraska was awakened, soon after. ■

4TH & 1 INCHES

Notes And Quotes From The Colorado Game

HERIAN SCORES AGAIN

Freshman tight end Matt Herian scored Nebraska's only touchdown, on an 80-yard pass play with 11:52 remaining in the second quarter. The reception was Herian's sixth, three of which have gone for touchdowns. He now has 260 yards, an average of 43.3 per reception.

Quarterback Jammal Lord "put it in the right spot again," said Herian.

The touchdown catch tied for the second-longest by a tight end in Cornhusker history. Jerry List caught an 80-yarder from Jerry Tagge against Hawaii in 1971. Todd Millikin holds the school record for tight ends, an 82-yarder from Steve Taylor against Missouri in 1988.

Herian also had a 15-yard reception.

Lord finished 6-of-17 passing for 119 yards and one interception. Despite being sacked three times, Lord shouldered the blame for his lack of success. "It was just bad throwing on my part," he said. "I was out of my element. I was out of my game. That hurt the team again today."

ENDORF HONORED

Junior walk-on place-kicker Dale Endorf was selected as Nebraska's Chevrolet ABC Player of the Game after kicking two field goals and an extra point. His 49-yard field goal was the Cornhuskers' longest since the 2000 Alamo Bowl game, in which Josh Brown kicked a 51-yarder.

MESSAGE TO THE TEAM

Solich was asked what he told the team afterward. "I talked to them a little bit about the game itself, that they played hard the entire ballgame and (was) proud of them for that, proud of them for the way they've responded this season even though we found ourselves in tough situations."

The loss was Nebraska's second at home, something that hasn't happened since 1980, and the Cornhuskers' first against Colorado in Lincoln since 1990 (27-12). "Certainly the record wasn't what any of us wanted," said Solich. "But I felt they battled throughout the year."

Solich said he expected the team to bounce back in a bowl game.

"They have been the kind of team that when they have been faced with problems, when they've struggled, they've come back out and they've gone back to work," he said.

Nebraska will be playing in a 34th consecutive bowl game.

RODGERS' RECORD FALLS

Senior cornerback DeJuan Groce returned two punts for 17 yards to increase his career total to 630 yards, breaking the Cornhusker record previously held by Johnny Rodgers (618).

Groce left the game with an injury, as did cornerback Pat Ricketts. "It was an extremely physical game," said defensive coordinator Craig Bohl. "I can't say enough about the effort of our players."

Nose tackle Ryon Bingham played with a "casted hand," Bohl said.

BRIGHT FUTURE

Senior I-back Dahrran Diedrick, who led the Cornhuskers with 96 yards rushing on only 13 carries, predicted Nebraska would get things turned around next season.

He compared this season's problems to those in 1998, when the Cornhuskers lost four games.

"The next year we really were the best team in the country," he said.

Nebraska finished 12-1 in 1999, with a 31-21 victory against Tennessee in the Fiesta Bowl. "So next year is going to be great for Nebraska," said Diedrick. "The young guys are going to step it up and the guys that are going to be seniors are going to take it all the way. It's going to be great watching them."

ALL-BIG 12

Josh Brown and DeJuan Groce were Nebraska's only first-team selections on the coaches' All-Big 12 team. Brown was the place-kicker and Groce was the punt returner.

Groce also was a second-team selection at cornerback, along with punter Kyle Larson.

I-back Dahrran Diedrick was a third-team I-back. Offensive tackle Richie Incognito, wide receivers Ross Pilkington and Wilson Thomas, tight end Aaron Golliday, running back David Horne, quarterback Jammal Lord, rush end Chris Kelsay, nose tackle Ryon Bingham, strongside linebacker Scott Shanle, and defensive backs Philip Bland and Fabian Washington all received honorable mention. ■

2002 Results

1	Aug. 24	Arizona State (8-5), W 48-10	1-0
2	Aug. 31	Troy State (4-8), W 31-16	2-0
3	Sept. 7	Utah State (4-7), W 44-13	3-0
4	Sept. 14	@ Penn State (9-3), L 40-7	3-1
5	Sept. 28	@ Iowa State (7-6), L 36-14	3-2
6	Oct. 5	McNeese St. (11-1), W 38-14	4-2
7	Oct. 12	Missouri (5-7), W 24-13	5-2
8	Oct. 19	@ Oklahoma St. (7-5), L 24-21	5-3
9	Oct. 26	@ Texas A&M (6-6), W 38-31	6-3
10	Nov. 2	Texas (10-2), L 27-24	6-4
11	Nov. 9	Kansas (2-10), W 45-7	7-4
12	Nov. 16	@ Kansas St. (10-2), L 49-13	7-5
13	Nov. 29	Colorado (9-3), L 28-13	7-6

Big 12 at a Glance

	North		All	
	Conf.			
Colorado	7	1	9	3
Kansas State	6	2	10	2
Iowa State	4	4	7	6
Nebraska	3	5	7	6
Missouri	2	6	5	7
Kansas	0	8	2	10

	South		All	
	Conf.			
Oklahoma	6	2	10	2
Texas	6	2	10	2
Texas Tech	5	3	8	5
Oklahoma State	5	3	7	5
Texas A&M	3	5	6	6
Baylor	1	7	3	9

Saturday, Nov. 23

Kansas State 38, Missouri 0
Oklahoma State 63, Baylor 28
Oklahoma 60, Texas Tech 15
Connecticut 37, Iowa State 20

Friday, Nov. 29

Colorado 28, Nebraska 13
Texas 50, Texas A&M 20

Saturday, Nov. 30

Oklahoma State 38, Oklahoma 28

Saturday, Dec. 7

Big 12 Championship, Houston

Big 12 Championship Game Matchup

Dec. 7, 7 p.m., Houston, Texas, ABC

Colorado (9-3)

Aug. 31 Colorado State, L 19-14
Sept. 7 San Diego State, W 34-14
Sept. 14 USC, L 40-3
Sept. 21 @ UCLA, W 31-17
Oct. 5 Kansas State, W 35-31
Oct. 12 @ Kansas, W 53-29
Oct. 19 Baylor, W 34-0
Oct. 26 Texas Tech, W 37-13
Nov. 2 @ Oklahoma, L 27-11
Nov. 9 @ Missouri, W 42-35, ot
Nov. 16 Iowa State, W 41-27
Nov. 29 @ Nebraska, W 28-13

Oklahoma (10-2)

Sept. 1 New Mexico St., W 41-7
Sept. 8 North Carolina, W 44-14
Sept. 22 at Houston, W 53-26
Sept. 29 Texas Tech, W 42-7
Oct. 6 Oklahoma (Dallas), L 14-3
Oct. 13 at Oklahoma State, W 45-17
Oct. 20 Colorado, W 41-7
Oct. 27 at Missouri, W 35-16
Nov. 3 at Baylor, W 49-10
Nov. 10 Kansas, W 59-0
Nov. 23 at Texas A&M, W 21-7
Nov. 30 at Oklahoma State, L 38-28

NU Future Schedules

(subject to changes)

2003

Aug. 30 Oklahoma St.
Sept. 6 Utah State
Sept. 13 Penn State
Sept. 20 at Southern Mississippi
Sept. 27 San Jose St.
Oct. 11 at Missouri
Oct. 18 Texas A&M
Oct. 25 Iowa State
Nov. 1 at Texas
Nov. 8 at Kansas
Nov. 15 Kansas State
Nov. 28 at Colorado
Dec. 6 Big 12 Championship at Kansas City

2004

Sept. 11 Southern Mississippi
Sept. 18 at Pittsburgh

2005

Sept. 17 Pittsburgh

2006

Sept. 16 at USC

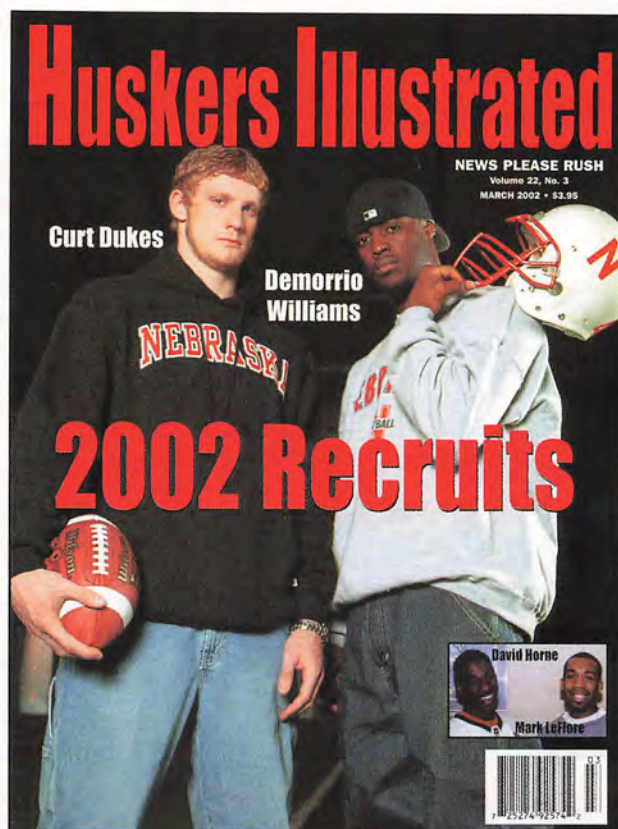
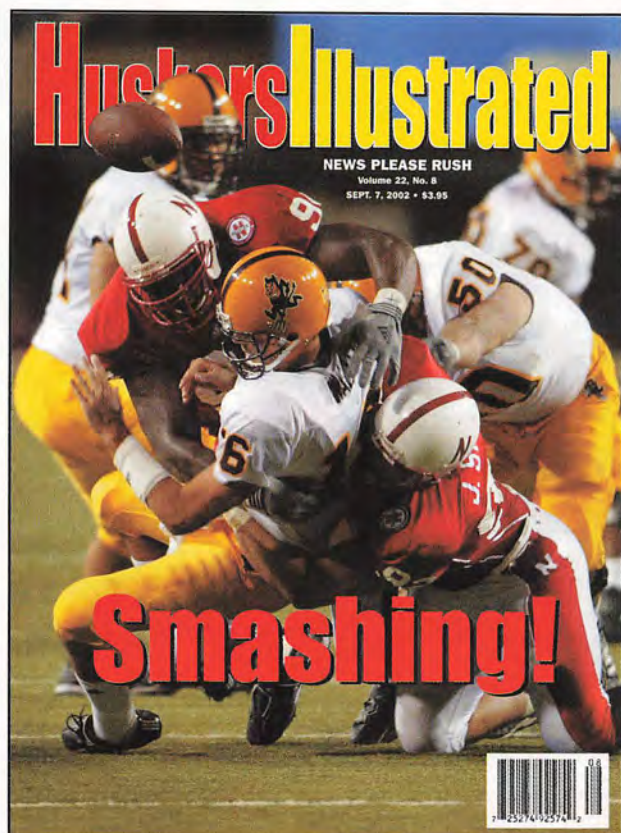
2007

Sept. 15 USC

Record Year-By Year Under Frank Solich

	Conf.		All	
1998	5	3	9	4
1999	7	1	12	1
2000	6	2	10	2
2001	7	1	11	2
2002	3	5	7	6
Totals	28	12	49	15

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BY THE NUMBERS

Nebraska vs. Colorado

Nov. 29, 2002 • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.

Score By Quarters

Colorado	7	0	14	7	—	28
Nebraska	0	10	3	0	—	13

Team Stats

	CU	NU
First Downs	21	18
Rushing	15	13
Passing	5	3
Penalty	1	2
Rushing Attempts	53	46
Yards Gained Rushing	272	257
Yards Lost Rushing	19	42
Net Yards Rushing	253	215
Net Yards Passing	122	119
Passes Attempted	23	17
Passes Completed	12	6
Had Intercepted	0	1
Total Plays	76	63
Total Net Yards	375	334
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.9	5.3
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	3-1
Penalties-Yards	6-58	3-35
Punts-Yards	9-340	7-296
Avg. Per Punt	48.6	42.3
Punt Returns-Yards	3-47	2-17
Interceptions-Yards	1-0	0-0
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	1-38	3-71
Possession Time	33:05	26:55

Scoring

CU — Derek McCoy 40-yard pass from Robert Hodge (Patrick Brougham kick)

NU — Matt Herian 80-yard pass from Jammal Lord (Dale Endorf kick)

NU — Endorf 33-yard field goal

NU — Endorf 49-yard field goal

CU — Bobby Purify 2-yard run (Brougham kick)

CU — Brandon Drumm 1-yard run (Brougham kick)

CU — Brandon Drumm 16-yard run (Brougham kick)

Att. — 77,804

Weather — cloudy

Temp. — 57

Individual Statistics

COLORADO

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Calhoun, B.	20	137	6.8	35	0
Purify, B.	17	62	3.6	21	1
Drumm, B.	4	33	8.3	16	0
Hodge, R.	7	17	2.4	13	0
Houston, M.	3	6	2.0	3	0
Team	2	-2	-1.0	0	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Hodge, R.	12-23-0	52.2	122	1

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
McCoy, D.	6	71	11.8	40	1
Donohoe, J.	2	16	8.0	9	0
Drumm, B.	2	14	7.0	11	0
Hackett, D.	1	11	11.0	11	0
Williams, B.	1	10	10.0	10	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Mariskal, M.	7	340	48.6	62

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Bloom, J.	3	47	15.7	35	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Bloom, J.	1	38	38.0	38	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Wahlroos, D.	3	7	10	0	0	0
Harris, M.	5	4	9	2-7	0	1-4
Strickland, D.	3	4	7	1-2	0	0
Brayton, T.	2	5	7	0	0	0
Nyenhuis, G.	4	1	5	3-12	0	1-5
Tufts, S.	3	2	5	2-3	0	0
Moorer, M.	2	3	5	0	0	0
Mossoni, K.	2	3	5	2-12	0	1-10
Surrell, C.	2	3	5	0	0	0
Willigers, J.	2	1	3	1-1	0	0
Billingsley, J.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Fluellen, D.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Iwhu, B.	1	1	2	1-5	0	0
Sneed, R.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Griffith, Z.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Killion, A.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Jackson, P.	0	0	0	0	1-0	0

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Diedrick, D.	13	96	7.4	15	0
Davies, J.	5	59	11.8	23	0
Lord, J.	21	53	2.5	24	0
Horne, D.	7	7	1.0	9	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	6-17-1	35.3	119	1

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Herian, M.	2	95	47.5	80	1
Ringenberg, K.	1	15	15.0	15	0
Davis, J.	1	6	6.0	6	0
Diedrick, D.	1	3	3.0	3	0
Horne, D.	1	0	0.0	0	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	7	296	42.3	52

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Groce, D.	2	17	8.5	10	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	3	71	23.7	39	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Bland, P.	8	3	11	1-3	0	0
Williams, D.	8	2	10	1-3	0	0
Ruud, B.	6	3	9	1-3	0	0
Bingham, R.	4	3	7	1-1	0	0
Clanton, J.	3	2	5	0	0	0
Shanle, S.	3	2	5	0	0	0
Washington, F.	4	0	4	0	0	0
Kabongo, P.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Bullocks, J.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Groce, D.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Kelsay, C.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Hollowell, T.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Larson, K.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Bullocks, D.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hopkins, L.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Smith, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Pippens, J.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Johnson, T.	0	1	1	0	0	0



Colorado's J.J. Billingsley tackles NU punt returner DeJuan Groce in the fourth quarter.

2002 SEASON STATS

RUSHING LEADERS

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPC	TD
Lord, J.	13	234	1,329	102.2	8
Diedrick, D.	13	166	839	64.5	6
Horne, D.	8	112	586	73.2	7
Davies, J.	13	37	178	13.7	4
Ross, C.	12	35	184	15.3	2
Davis, J.	12	23	151	12.6	1
LeFlare, M.	12	4	80	6.7	1
Simmons, M.	12	13	56	4.7	0

PASSING LEADERS

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	13	88-188-10	46.8	1,269	11
Stuntz, M.	6	10-25-0	40.0	100	0

RECEIVING LEADERS

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPR	TD
Thomas, W.	13	27	319	11.8	24.5	3
Pilkington, R.	13	13	277	21.3	21.3	1
Davis, J.	12	9	62	6.9	5.2	0
Cornelsen, B.	13	8	106	13.2	8.2	0
Hassebroek, T.	13	7	81	11.6	6.2	1
Herian, M.	11	6	260	43.3	23.6	3
Ross, C.	12	5	39	7.8	3.2	0
LeFlare, M.	12	5	26	6.2	2.2	0
Bowling, J.	12	4	86	21.5	7.2	1
Diedrick, D.	13	4	19	4.8	1.5	0
Horne, D.	8	4	7	1.8	0.9	0
Gollday, A.	13	2	29	9.7	2.2	2

FIELD GOALS LEADER

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, J.	12	15	11	48

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	67	2,893	43.2	71

PUNT RETURN LEADER

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Groce, D.	35	630	18.0	89	3

KICKOFF RETURN LEADER

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	37	889	24.0	53	0

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Bland, P.	13	44	38	82	6-16	1-0	0
Ruud, B.	13	35	46	81	12-37	0	2-17
Williams, D.	13	36	44	80	5-21	0	1-15
Shanle, S.	13	31	39	70	5-19	0	2-15
Bingham, R.	13	20	43	63	9-18	0	1-5-9
Kabongo, P.	13	12	48	60	9-25	0	2-17
Hollowell, T.	13	18	38	56	2-6	0	1-5
Groce, D.	13	36	19	55	2-3	4-26	0
Ricketts, P.	12	31	23	54	1-4	2-5	0
Johnson, T.	13	16	32	48	9-21	0	1-5-6

TEAM STATISTICS

	NU	OPP
Total Offensive Yards	4,865	4,702
Plays	890	932
Average Per Play	5.5	5.0
Average Per Game	374.2	361.7
Net Rushing Yards	3,496	2,001
Attempts	672	517
TDs Rushing	29	23
Net Passing Yards	1,369	2,701
Completions	98	206
Average Per Pass	6.3	6.5
Average Per Catch	14.0	13.1
Average Per Game	105.3	207.8
TDs Passing	11	11
Sacks By-Yards	28-202	25-181
Fumbles-Lost	30-12	22-8
Penalties-Yards	79-714	84-635

Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	65	109	94	92	0	360
Opponents	68	62	100	78	0	308

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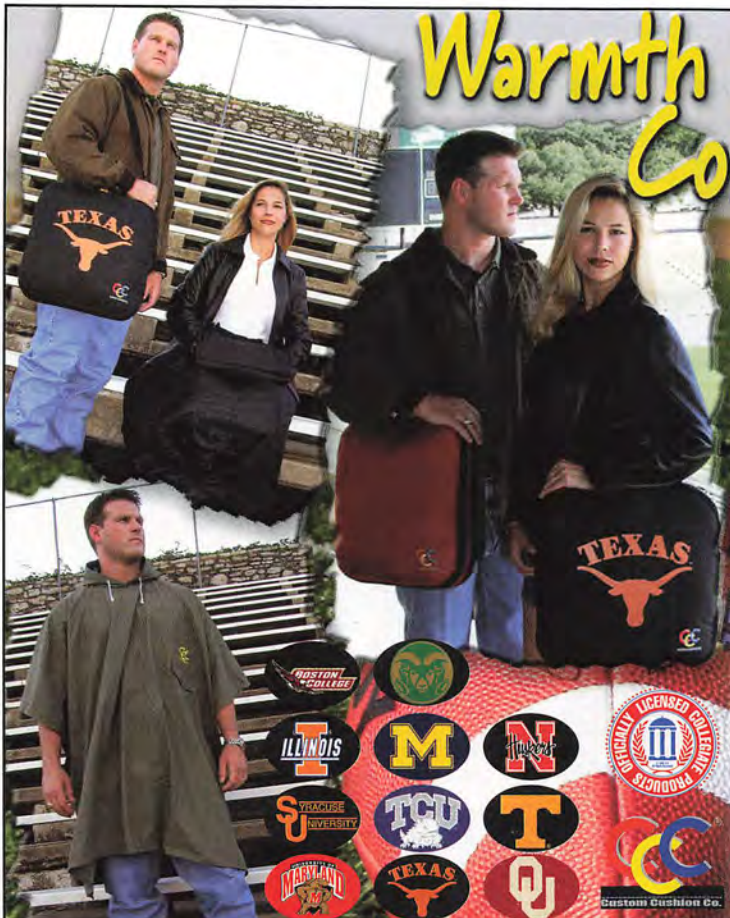
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Board Work

*Husker guard
Clemmons
stopped growing,
but he didn't
stop rebounding*

By Mike Babcock

Rebounding comes naturally to Brennon Clemmons. He has been rebounding "ever since I started playing basketball," the Cornhuskers' senior guard said. "I always had to rebound."

That was, in part, a function of his size. "I grew fast," he said.

Because he was tall for his age as a youngster, he found himself playing down low.

He had grown to nearly 6-foot-2 by the time he was a freshman in high school, and "a lot of people thought I was going to be at least 6-6," he said. "The tallest I wanted to be was 6-5."

"I would have been real happy (at 6-5). Unfortunately, that didn't happen."

Clemmons hasn't gotten noticeably taller since that freshman year; he's still 6-2. But even though many of those around him are considerably taller, he continues to rebound.

He was Nebraska's second-leading rebounder last season, with 140, averaging 5.0 per game to rank among the nation's top 15 rebounding guards (players 6-2 and under).

He pulled down 10 rebounds twice, against Sam Houston State and Iowa State.

The key is quickness, according to Clemmons. By the time an opponent sets up to block him out, he's not



Senior guard Brennon Clemmons recorded a triple-double in Nebraska's second exhibition game. He finished with 12 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

there. Also, "sometimes I think I luck out," he said. "The ball just bounces to me."

"I'm going forward and I just go up and grab it."

However it is accomplished, his effort on the boards is important to a team that was out-rebounded last season by an average of five per game — and nearly nine in confer-

ence play.

Clemmons also used his quickness to lead the team in steals last season, with 48.

As with the rebounding, he takes pride in that. "If you're not scoring well, you're not shooting the ball well, you can look forward to picking yourself up on defense," he said.

"It's good to have more than one thing in your game."

That was dramatically illustrated in the Cornhuskers' second exhibition game, when he had a triple double: 12 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in 25 minutes of action.

"I'd like to see him that well-rounded (every game)," Coach Barry Collier said.

Clemmons, the team's only senior right now, is more comfortable after a season of adjusting to Collier's system following his transfer from Olney (Ill.) Central Community College.

Though Clemmons was familiar with Collier's teams at Butler from watching them while he was in high school in Indianapolis, and from

being recruited by Collier, he had to adapt to a style of play that was more disciplined than the one to which he had become accustomed at Olney Central.

"There we ran the ball a lot, up and down," he said. "Here it's kind of in between. Sometimes we'll get out and push it. But basically, it's more of a half-court offense."

"It took some adjusting, did get frustrating. Sometimes you want to go back to the old ways, spread the floor. But you can't win a lot of games like that. You've got to have a team game."

Clemmons worked on his shooting during the off-season, as well as on his ball-handling. "You'd better handle the ball," he said. "Turnovers are a big thing." He had a team-high 69.

He started 14 games last season, including the first four in conference play, before giving way to John Robinson. He averaged 8.8 points and shot a team-high 106 free throws, an indication of his aggressive approach to offense. He made 73

of the free throws, for 68.9 percent.

He shot only 36.5 percent from the field, but his outside shooting improved as the season went on. He shot 40 percent from 3-point range in conference games, compared to 34.4 percent overall.

With Robinson gone, Clemmons is back in the starting lineup, determined to play with a consistency that was lacking at times during his first season as a Cornhusker.

"I have to be more confident," he said. "I can't come in like I was a freshman. I have to come out confident and play strong, every game. I don't want to come out one game and play good and then the next game it's like I'm not even there. I want to make my presence known every game."

One thing is for certain; his presence will be felt on the boards. "People always talk about my size, that I'm not as big. I tell them, don't let my size fool you," he said.

"I can go in there and battle, too."

He has the rebounding numbers to back that up. ■

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HIL12

Extra Work

Weight room work helps NU's Morse, teammates play more minutes

By Mike Babcock

As often as not, Katie Morse is the last to leave the weight room. And if she isn't the last, she's usually close. "It just takes me a while," she said with a laugh.

The junior from Minden, Iowa — and the team's Lifter of the Year last season — had just finished lifting after a recent practice. The next-to-last player had finished a good 5 minutes earlier.

"I just take too long, I guess," Morse said.

Taking too long or not, one thing is certain: Morse is comfortable in the weight room. She has been lifting weights since her freshman year at Tri-Center Community High School.

She lifted during the basketball season and in the summer, "all the time," she said. She was tall and "not very muscular, so it was always something I thought I needed to do."

Her interest in lifting was a result of watching older siblings in the weight room, and early on, her enthusiasm for it exceeded her understanding of how to do it properly.

That didn't occur until she took a kinesiology class.

Morse is as dedicated in the classroom as she is in the weight room. She carries a 3.371 grade-point average in secondary education and was a first-team Academic All-Big 12



After averaging 3.2 points and 2.6 rebounds as a sophomore, Katie Morse is expected to play a key role this season.

selection last year.

In any case, the class "taught me more why you lift on certain days," she said.

Work in the weight room has served not only Morse but also her teammates well this season, under new head coach Connie Yori. With only six scholarship players, the Huskers have had to condition themselves to stay on the court, to play significant minutes.

Lifting and running, "we're able to play longer than we have in the past," said Morse.

That was apparent in the first two games. With Shahidrah Roberts, one of the six, sidelined by injury, the other five were on the floor for more than 30 minutes apiece in each of the victories.

Morse played 31 minutes in the 63-40 opener against Grambling and 34 minutes in a 71-56 victory against Rice two days later — she left with 5:17 remaining, after picking up a fifth foul.

Last season, Morse played an average of 13.4 minutes per game.

Her increased playing time is a result of more than just necessity, of course. Yori has described the 6-foot-4 center as the team's "most consistent player day in and day out in practice."

Morse's numbers were less than impressive as a sophomore, and part-time starter. She averaged 3.2 points and 2.6 rebounds, with 28 blocked shots — second best on the team.

During the off-season, "I wanted to work more on my post moves, taking the ball to the hole," she said.

Though she wouldn't hesitate to take an open 3-point shot — she was 2-for-4 from 3-point range a year ago — "I mostly worked on inside stuff and mid-range shooting," she said.

Still, "if I'm open, that's a shot I'll take," she said of the 3-pointer.

Her attitude might be a result of coming from Tri-Center Community High, the school that produced the leading 3-point shooter in Cornhusker men's history, Cary Cochran.

"I'm comfortable with it," Morse said with a smile. "It's not that big of a deal."

The Huskers aren't looking for

outside shooting from Morse, however.

The transition to Yori from Paul Sanderford has been difficult for Morse, as it has been for her teammates. In some ways, "you kind of feel like you're a freshman again," she said.

But Yori and her assistants "were good at communicating with us, getting us to talk with them. She (Yori) has been really awesome as far as adapting to us. That made it easier."

Morse came to Nebraska with experience at adapting. She had four different basketball coaches in four seasons in high school. "Looking

back on it, it was different," she said.

"They all taught me something a little bit different."

What wasn't different, however, was her commitment in the weight room. "I think it's a part of the game, especially in the Big 12 because you're going to go against strong, quick people every night," she said. "In order to match up with them, you've got to get yourself prepared."

"Everybody on the team has to be prepared to win."


And that requires time in the weight room, usually a little more time for Morse than for her teammates. ■

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Scott Brown

Nebraska wrapped up its fifth consecutive Big 12 championship with two matches to go in the regular season.

Turning It Up

Practices against All-Americans seem to spark 2002 Huskers

By Todd Henrichs

John Cook refers to it countless times in each volleyball season, the knack for knowing when to push and went to pull back, whom to bark at and whom to coddle in the four-month drive to the national title.

At Nebraska, the art of coaching is

figuring out how best to prepare a team of championship potential for the championship season. In volleyball, it all comes down to December's 64-team derby to determine the team full of smiling champions and those bound for a winter of discontent.

But that doesn't mean you can overlook what happens on a Saturday night in early November, at least that's what Cook believes. When Nebraska didn't play up to a championship level against Texas Tech, Cook let the Huskers know it. There was no screaming, no brow-beating, in the locker room chat that followed an otherwise familiar three-game Nebraska sweep of an over-

whelmed conference opponent, just a stern reminder that they had to keep improving.

When the Huskers ultimately look back on the 2002 campaign, captain Lindsay Wischmeier said it might be the match that paved the way for a national championship.

"I think we woke up after that," Wischmeier said. "We were winning, but we weren't playing well."

"I think we finally realized that winning isn't good enough. You need to execute at a high level every time if we want to be in the final four."

There will be other mileposts remembered if Nebraska drives into New Orleans for the final four Dec.

19-21. You could point to the learning curve after a loss to Southern California in early September or the light bulb that Cook said flashed on when the Huskers rallied to win at Texas in November after dropping the first game.

There was Greichaly Cepero's one-match suspension in October that Cook said reminded him of the adversity faced by Nebraska's 2000 championship team upon losing starter Laura Pilakowski to an appendectomy.

But the turning point that Cook is counting on surrounds Nebraska's practices. Without ever touching the thermostat, Cook turned up the heat in the middle of the season by pitting NU starters against the likes of former All-Americans Fiona Nepo, Jenny Kropp and Nancy Metcalf every day.

It appeared to work, lighting a spark in the Huskers even when the opponents were lowly Iowa State and Oklahoma. With the regular season winding down, Nebraska began to increasingly run points, and Cook saw a championship mentality develop.

Entering the tournament, most experts consider there to be five title contenders. Southern California, Hawaii and Stanford all have been ranked No. 1 at one point in the season. Nebraska and Florida have the talent to win, but both have faced questionable competition in conference play.

That's part of why Cook said the intense practices are so important.

"The situations we have been putting them in have been forcing them to really have to play hard to even be competitive in practice with the team that's on the other side," Cook said. "When we play teams after practice, they're going to look in slow motion for them. Some exciting things are happening."

Other things seem ho-hum but for the historical perspective.

Nebraska wrapped up its fifth consecutive Big 12 championship with still two matches to go in the regular season. The Huskers' winning streak against conference opponents was at 69, ranking sixth in NCAA history.

Nebraska's 59-match winning streak at home ranked as the third-

longest nationally.

Seniors Amber Holmquist and Laura Pilakowski each surpassed 1,000 kills for their careers. Holmquist, too, became Nebraska's all-time leader in blocks early in the season.

Wischmeier could become Nebraska's all-time leader in digs during the postseason. The native Nebraskan has played in every match of her four-year career although she was slowed by a stress fracture in her ankle for part of this season.

At times, Cook questioned if he should be resting Nebraska's libero. But part of the art of coaching is taking the lead from your team's leaders, and Wischmeier wanted to press on.

"If I don't have a broken leg or if there's some reason why I can't play, then I want to be able to play," Wischmeier said the night she went past 1,000 digs for her career. "I'm not going to have a legacy like what Greicha's going to have, or Amber, or Laura, but hopefully it will be a legacy that I was on two national championship teams." ■



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Entering the Home Stretch

December, January will be busy months for NU staff

By Doug Horwich

This has not been an ordinary season for Nebraska on the football field, and the same could easily be said for the Huskers' recruiting season.

While some schools like Florida and Florida State tend to be late recruiters, Nebraska traditionally has been an early recruiting school. The most extreme example of this is probably the 1995 season, when Nebraska had its entire class locked up by Christmas.

With only two months remaining in the 2003 recruiting season, the Husker coaches have their work cut out for them. The 2003 class figures



Larry Edwards, a linebacker from Wharton High School in Tampa, Fla., plans to take a visit to Nebraska. He said the Huskers are looking at him as a middle linebacker.

to be the largest Nebraska class in some time, with the Huskers expected to sign as many as 25 scholarship athletes this year.

The months of December and January will be extraordinarily busy months for the Nebraska staff, as the coaches will be making in-home visits with prospects, in addition to playing host to a large number of recruits in Lincoln.

One prospect who intends to visit during that time is linebacker Larry Edwards (6-foot-2, 225 pounds, 4.6 40-yard dash) from Wharton High School in Tampa, Fla.

Edwards already has scheduled visits to Louisiana State and North Carolina, and is working to set up a trip to Lincoln in early January.

"I've got a final five of North Carolina, LSU, Nebraska, Georgia and Florida," Edwards said. "The first three are recruiting me the hardest. Nebraska wants me as a middle linebacker, and the other two say I can play on the outside."

Edwards is open to playing any of the linebacker positions and likes what the Huskers have to offer.

"It's just one of those dominant schools," he said. "It would be a great opportunity for me to go there. They have a great history."

"They aren't doing too well right now, but all they need is a couple of impact recruits, and they can turn it all the way back around. Coach (Jeff) Jamrog told me they are looking for someone to change the program back to where it was."

Edwards currently favors the nearby University of Florida, but the standout linebacker has yet to receive an offer from the Gators. With so many talented prospects coming out of the state each year, many players simply fall through the cracks, and Florida's loss could be Nebraska's gain.

Another player being pursued heavily by Nebraska is offensive tackle Jason Sperdon (6-5, 275, 5.1) from Granger, Utah.

Sperdon has offers from a number of schools already, including Nebraska, Oregon, Arizona, Brigham Young and Utah.

Home-state BYU has the inside track on Sperdon, but the Cougars are the only program that has hosted

Nebraska Commitments for 2003

Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Greg Austin	Cypress, Texas	6-2	275	OL
Andy Birkel	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	180	WR
Steve Craver	Hurst, Texas	6-2	195	DB/LB
Josh Mueller	Columbus (Lakeview), Neb.	6-7	250	TE
*Trevor Neeman	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	225	TE/DE
*Kade Pittman	North Platte, Neb.	6-0	190	RB/DB
Bo Ruud	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	210	LB
Brandon Teamer	Omaha (Central), Neb.	6-5	256	DE

*scheduled to enter school in the fall of 2002 as part-time students and receive scholarships in January 2003.

him thus far.

"I will probably take some trips before I decide," Speredon said. "I have visited the 'U' (BYU). I liked the atmosphere there. I would still like to see what other schools are like."

One school that Speredon would like to visit is Nebraska.

"I get a lot of mail information — sounds like a great school," he said. "They have a large number of football players that graduate. I like them education-wise and football-wise."

Speredon is a Mormon and does intend to take a two-year mission during his collegiate career.

"I would like to redshirt the first year or play one year before my mission," he said. The Husker staff obviously feels that he would be worth the wait.

Another Utah player that the Huskers have been pursuing for months, defensive tackle Brian Soi (6-4, 295, 4.9) from Timpview High School in Provo, already has arranged a trip to Lincoln. With his senior season now over, Soi is hammering out his visit schedule.

"I have set up two official visits so far," Soi said. "I'll be going to USC on Dec. 7 and Nebraska the following week on Dec. 13. I'm still planning my other visits, and right now I'm looking to visit Oregon and Tennessee, too. Tennessee is in my top four now, along with USC, Nebraska and Oregon."

Although Soi favors Southern Cal, Nebraska is not far behind and could move into the lead with a strong visit.

"SC is my leader right now," he said. "I like their tradition as far as linemen go. I know their coaching staff well, and I like the warm weather there, too."

"Nebraska is No. 2. Again, it's just the school and that they're a big-time program. I like Coach (Ron) Brown a lot. He's a very easy-to-talk-to guy. He said that I can come in and play right off the bat there. I think it's a nice place to go to."

The Nebraska staff also is attempting to schedule an official visit with superstar athlete Mario Whitney (6-1, 215, 4.5) from St. Bonaventure High School in Ventura, Calif. Whitney is one of the top high school athletes in the nation

Line Prospects Among Visitors

By Rick Shaw

As the college football season winds down, the football recruiting season is beginning to shift into high gear. The Nebraska staff expected at least eight players to take their official visits to Lincoln over Thanksgiving weekend.

One of the players scheduled to be on hand when the Huskers met Colorado was Ian Yates Cunningham. It was the first trip of the recruiting process for the 6-foot-5, 300-pound offensive guard prospect from Hebron High in Lewisville, Texas.

"I'm packing for cold weather," Cunningham said. "It is about 40 degrees in Texas, so it has to be cooler in Nebraska. I'll get in Friday morning before the game and will leave on Sunday afternoon. I'm looking forward to it."

Cunningham, who is rated the No. 14 offensive guard prospect in the country by Rivals.com claims a current top three of Virginia, Georgia Tech and Nebraska. He holds offers from more than 25 Division I schools.

Joining Cunningham in Lincoln was fellow Texan and friend Will Oliver. Oliver, a 6-4, 270-pound offensive line prospect out of Lindale, Texas, has built a friendship with Cunningham over the past several months.

"Nebraska is one of my top choices, and Ian also has them high on his list," Oliver said. "It would be fun to play together if it works out."

Oliver, who is rated as the fifth best center prospect by Rivals.com had committed to Texas A&M last spring. He has since reconsidered his pledge to the Aggies and now lists Nebraska and Texas Tech as his two leaders.

Nebraska is looking for immediate help on the offensive line, and junior college lineman Anthony Guerrero may provide the assistance that the NU staff is looking for. The 6-3, 320-pound guard from Cerritos (Calif.) Junior College was to be in Lincoln over Thanksgiving weekend. Guerrero lists Nebraska and Florida as his top two schools.

"Nebraska runs my style of offense," Guerrero said. "Also, it's a lineman's school."

Guerrero, who averaged eight pancakes a game for Cerritos in 2002, is considering scholarship offers from Iowa State, Kansas, and Arizona, in addition to Florida and Nebraska.

Nebraska expected speedy cornerback Adrian Turner to also be in Lincoln the weekend of the Colorado game. The 5-10, 180-pound athlete from Terrell, Texas, currently lists Nebraska as his top school.

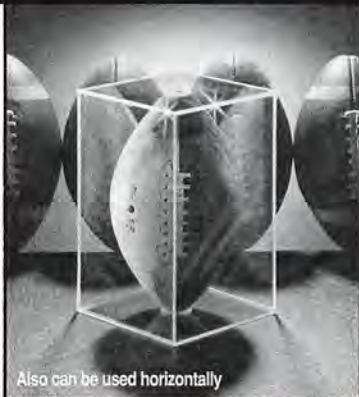
"My top two are probably Arkansas and Nebraska," Turner said. "Nebraska has the edge right now because they are telling me that I could come in and start next year. Nebraska is a top five or top 10 team every year. This season has no influence on me. They'll be back."

Turner, who turned in a 4.34-second 40-yard dash time at Arkansas' summer camp, is also looking at Louisiana Tech, TCU, and Oklahoma.

Nebraska entered the Thanksgiving holiday looking for a win against Colorado and a commitment or two heading into the month of December. ■

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and is a versatile talent who can play any number of positions.

Though heavily recruited by top programs around the country, Whitney currently lists Nebraska among his final five, along with Florida State, Southern Cal, Miami and Tennessee.

Whitney already has scheduled visits to USC and Florida State, but Nebraska appears to be in position to get one of his three remaining visits.

"I'm going to try and schedule a trip there (to Nebraska)," Whitney said. "I really want to go there and check things out."

Whitney's criteria for his future school include "tradition, surroundings, academics and playing time."

Academics especially will play a major role in his decision.

"Academics is huge," Whitney said. "It's like, basically, what are you going to do for me? I know what you will do for me on the football field, but what about off the football field? I'm going to find out what school has the best academic support."

Whitney is truly deserving of the "slash" designation, as the talented senior excelled this season at three positions. In addition to being a dominant wide receiver for St. Bonaventure, Whitney also carried the football from the running back position and even served as the school's field goal kicker.

"It's kind of funny how it all came about," Whitney said. "Everyone was saying, 'someone get out there and kick.' So, I just ran on the field and pushed a 35-yard field goal through. So, the kicker position just stuck I guess."

Whitney is open to playing either wide receiver or running back, and his versatility gives teams multiple options in utilizing his skills.

"My best thing I can do is just my ability," he said. "I can just go full speed and stop on a dime and just go the other way. It's all natural moves, man. I go full speed and then stop right there, and then make a new cut or whatever."

"I just feel like I have the ability to do a lot of things that nobody else can do. That is my major strength." ■

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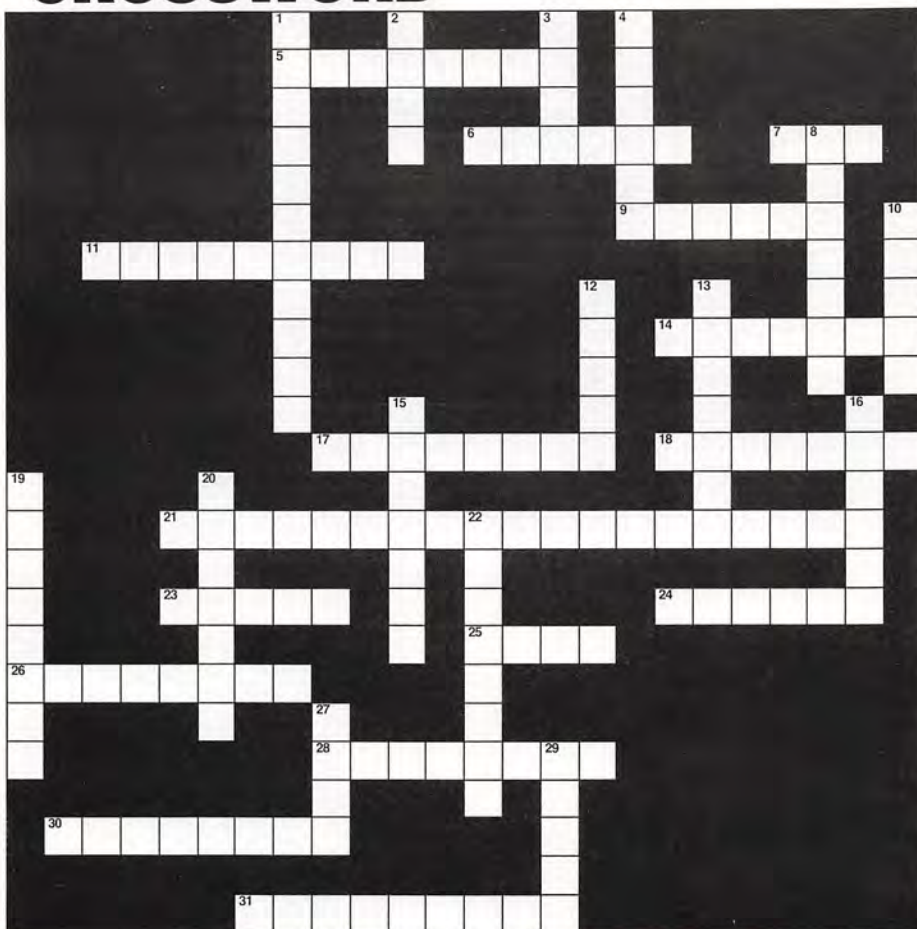
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'It Leaves A Bad Taste'

Yet another tradition takes a serious hit during the final home game



Mike BABCOCK

AS BRANDON DRUMM RUMBLED 16 yards for the touchdown that erased any hope of a comeback, a pop bottle landed in the south end zone, not all that far from the Colorado fullback.

The bottle was tossed from the south stands, creating a predictable stir among security personnel and police, who attempted to identify the perpetrator in the mass of fans heading to the exits.

When the game ended, with the Buffaloes in possession at the other end of the field, another plastic bottle, hurled from the stands above, lay in the south end zone, an indication that yet another Nebraska tradition had taken a serious hit during the final home game of 2002.

During the Cornhuskers' string of 33 nine-win seasons, Nebraska fans have earned a reputation for being among the nation's best, applauding opposing teams as well as their own.

On the day after Thanksgiving, however, they applauded neither.

As the game wound down, their boos clashed with the celebratory sounds coming from the Colorado section. And more to the point, the boos were directed at the Cornhuskers.

The boos, though hardly universal, were forceful enough to be heard in stands that held an announced 77,804 at one point. That point wasn't late in the fourth quarter, however.

For the first time in his Cornhusker career, I-back Dahrnan Diedrick looked up from the field in the closing minutes and it seemed as if "almost everybody had already gone home," he said.

Diedrick was among the 27 seniors who had been greeted with cheers before the game. In less than four hours, the cheers that hadn't turned to boos were simply silenced.

"It's just a horrible feeling to not be able to leave your last home game ever knowing you didn't win the game," said Diedrick. "It leaves a bad taste in your mouth."

The fans shouldn't have made that taste more sour, however.

The scene was backlit by speculation regarding the future of a coaching staff that has contributed significantly to Nebraska's remarkable run of success over the past four decades.

Lincoln and Omaha newspapers made the obligatory rounds of assistants — all but offensive line coach Milt Tenopir showed up for post-game interviews — in an

attempt to sort out fact from rumor. Dan Young, kickers and offensive line coach, hinted that some assistants might be encouraged to retire.

Coach Frank Solich told reporters that the team would meet on the following Monday afternoon to discuss bowl game preparations and "other issues," which he would not specify.

About the only streak that has remained in tact this season involves bowl games. Nebraska will be playing in a 34th consecutive bowl game at some point in December.

Ironically, the Cornhuskers might be better off staying home for the holidays.

Though his non-seniors can benefit from additional practice time, Solich might benefit more from time spent evaluating the program and staff and, most of all, focusing on recruiting.

A bowl game offers an opportunity to end "on a high note, with a victory over a good team," senior rush end and co-captain Chris Kelsay said, expressing the players' consensus.

The Cornhuskers don't want to finish 7-7, "with a loss to Colorado and a loss in the bowl," said sophomore rover Philip Bland. "That's something in our minds for sure."

Preparing for a bowl "shouldn't be tough for anybody," junior quarterback Jammal Lord said.

A bowl game offers only an immediate reward, however. Nebraska's needs are long-term. There is little difference in finishing 8-6 or 7-6 — or 7-7, for that matter.

Saying no to a bowl invitation isn't an option under Big 12 rules, unless, apparently, it comes from the Humanitarian Bowl in Boise, Idaho. So the Cornhuskers will be bowl bound, though probably not with nearly the fan following that the bowl officials expect when they make the invitation.

"A lot of people just look at the wins and losses; that's all they see," said true freshman tight end Matt Herian, a rising star. "We just tell ourselves the team has got to stay together. We can't listen to what everybody's saying because that will just bring us down further."

The Cornhuskers are down as far as they have been since 1961. And the support they have enjoyed these many years has been shown to have its limits. The bottles in Memorial Stadium's south end zone, though not directed at them, were evidence of that sad fact. ■



Dahrnan Diedrick was one of 27 seniors introduced before the game.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 20 years. Mike can be reached at MumblyDog@aol.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.



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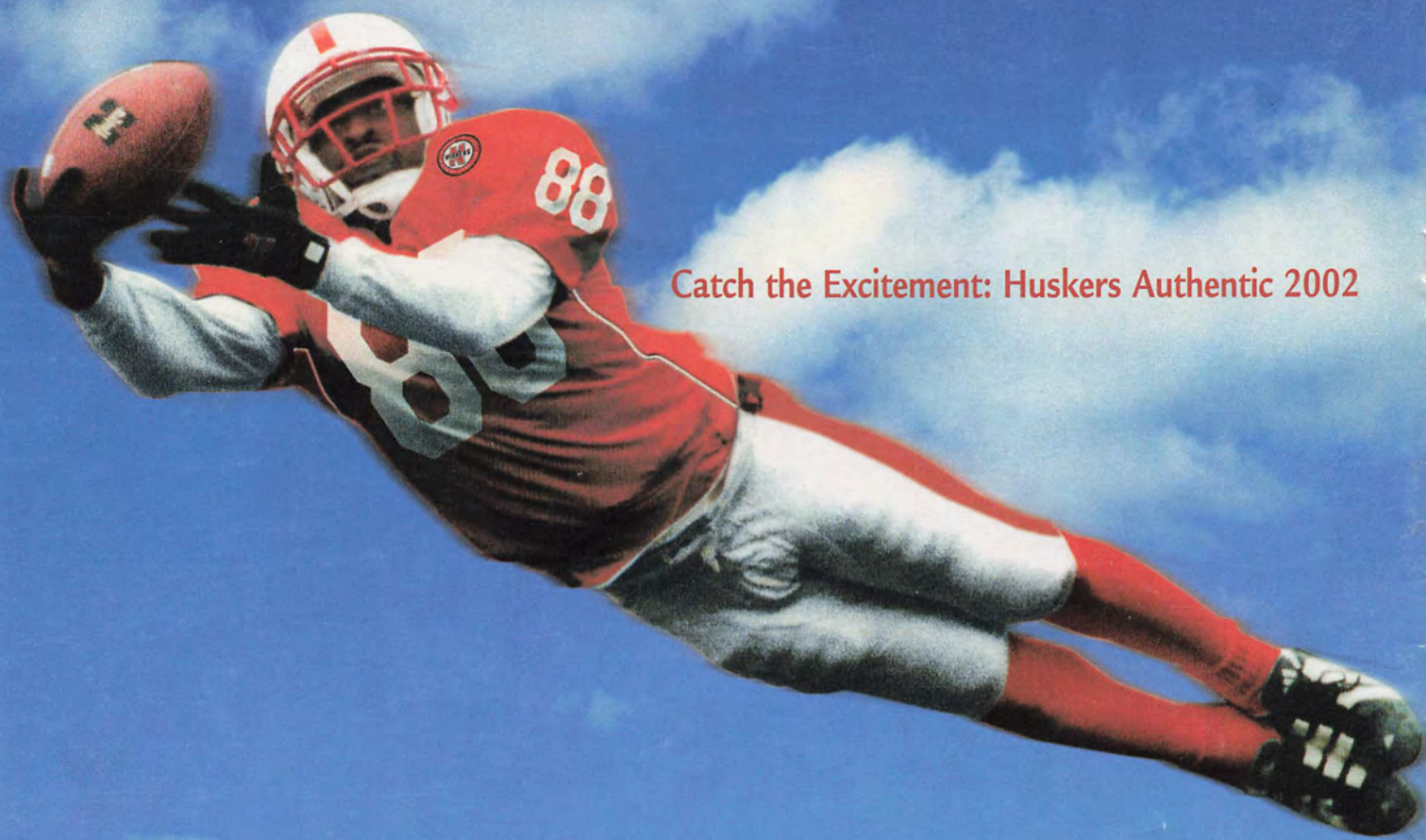


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